

A
Practical Discourse
CONCERNING
VOWS:
WITH
A Special Reference to
BAPTISM
AND THE
LORD's SUPPER.

By EDMUND CALAMY.

L O N D O N :

Printed by Geo. Larkin Jun. and are to
be Sold by John Lawrence, at the
Angel in the Poultry. 1697.

Table of Contents

TO THOSE

Who are under the

PASTORAL CARE

Of the Reverend

Mr. *DANIEL WILLIAMS.*

My Dear Friends,

WHAT I here put into your Hands, is your Own already. To you was the Substance of the ensuing Discourse Deliver'd from the Pulpit; and 'twas your Request that put me upon Preparing it for the Press. I am glad to understand that I did not wholly lose my Labour, while I so many Sacrament Days successively entertain'd you on this Subject: And am not without hope that what you have found Beneficial, may be Profitable to some others also. I expect to pass under a variety of Censures, but so the great End of my Ministry be but furthered, I can easily over-look them.

A 2

IT.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

IT hath been my Earnest Endeavour ever since I have been with you, to promote Serious, Practical, Christianity, among you, without attempting to draw you to, or fix you in, any Particular Sect, Party, or Interest whatever. I heartily rejoyce to find a Catholick Spirit prevail so much among you, the general want whereof, all who are truly concern'd for the Honour of Religion, find so much cause to lament.

I HIGHLY Esteem and Honour you, on the Account of your Inviolable Respect, and firm Adherence to your Reverend Pastor, in the midst of all those Storms the great Enemy of Souls hath rais'd against him, in order to the diminishing his Usefulness: Your Steadiness in so violent a Tempest as he not long since pass'd through, which plainly had its Rise from beneath, was God's great Mercy, the Devil's Disappointment, your Pastors Support, and your Glory.

I HEARTILY thank you for all the Testimonies of Respect and Kindness, I have receiv'd from you, since I have been spending my pains amongst you. I bless the Lord that he hath made any use of me, to promote your Knowledge, Faith, or Holiness: And I desire he may have all the Glory of any Good wherein I may have been Instrumental.

I BE-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

I BESEECH you, my Dear Friends, to go on more and more to adorn your Christian Profession: Let your Tempers and Lives shew to whom you belong: This will be the way to honour God, to strengthen the Hands, and chear the Hearts of your Ministers, and you'll reap the Fruit in due time. Go on to shun Extrems, and you'll avoid the Dangers that attend them. Place as little of your Religion as is possible in Separation. Be always ready to receive Light in Divine Things; and never think your selves past Improvements. Love all that love God and Goodness, how much soever they differ from you. As far as you are able, speak Well of those who speak Ill of you; and return not Railing for Railing: But do what in you lies to live Peaceably with all Men. Beware of more *Serpentine Subtilty* than a *Dove-like Innocence* can temper. Be strictly Just in all your Dealings; Circumspect in your Walk, Temperate in all things; and let your Moderation be known unto all Men; For the Lord is at hand. Let it be your Endeavour to get well furnish'd Minds, warm Hearts, Governable Spirits, tender Consciences, and heavenly Affections, and your Stability and Fruitfulness will be signal.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

OFTEN Reflect on the Strength and Sacredness of the Divine VOWS you are under, which the Ensuing Treatise is design'd to help you rightly to Understand and Improve: And take care to live Faithfully up to them, if you have any Regard to the Favour of God, the Honour of Christ, your own Present Peace, or Future Happiness.

AND now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and the Word of his Grace: I leave the Success of my Endeavours to Him who led me into these Meditations; And make it my Request to you, That when you are most Serious and Fervent at the Throne of Grace, you would not be Unmindful of

Hoxton,
May 24.
1697.

Your Affectionate Soul-Servant,

Edm. Calamy.

THE Reader is desired before he proceeds to the Perusal of the ensuing Treatise, to correct the following *Errata* with his Pen. Pag. 9. lin. 12. blot out *more an*, and read, *no intimation*. P. 13. last line, for *a* put *the* Sense. P. 147. l. 5. in *without* dele *our*. P. 149. l. 2. between *in* and *Service* add *his*. P. 165. l. 22. change *to* into *so*. P. 198. l. 2. change *curbs* into *ruhs*. P. 213. l. 27. for *decreases* r. *encreases*. P. 216. l. 24, 25. put *God* into the place of *stop*, and *stop* into the place of *God*.

There are some few other literal Mistakes and Faults in Pointing, which must be charged on the haste of the Press; which need not be particularly mentioned, because the Sense and Connexion sufficiently corrects them.

THE CONTENTS.

| | |
|---|---------|
| T HE Introduction. | Page 1. |
| CHAP. I. Certain Preliminary Observations concerning the Nature and Kinds of Divine Vows. | P. 4. |
| CHAP. II. Of the General Vow whereby all that we are and have, is sincerely devoted to God as our Absolute Owner and Proprietor. | P. 14. |
| CHAP. III. Of Sacramental Vows. | P. 20. |
| CHAP. IV. Of the Baptismal Vow. The sum of it in Form, as made by Persons Baptiz'd when Adult. | P. 36. |
| CHAP. V. Of the Baptismal Vow as to those Baptiz'd in Infancy. An Account of the different concern of Parents and Children in it; and a distinct Address to each concerning the Duty resulting from it. | P. 48. |
| CHAP. VI. Certain Useful Observations about the Consequence of Keeping or Breaking the Baptismal Vow: And of the Recognition of it, as necessary to a Regular Admission to the Lords Table. | P. 73. |
| CHAP. VII. Of the Lords Supper. That it is a Federal Ordinance, implying a Covenant Transaction between God and Us; and supposing a Renewal of Solemn Vows to be the Lords. | P. 94. |
| CHAP. VIII. Of an express Renewal of our Christian Vows every time we go to the Holy Communion: And Directions about the right management of it. | P. 190. |

CHAP. IX. Of the Nature, Sacredness, and Strength of the Obligation which lies on all those to lead an Holy Life, who often Repeat Sacramental Vows. P. 137.

CHAP. X. Of the dreadful Case which all those are in, who heap vows upon vows, without any serious sense of their force, and without any real hearty endeavours to answer and pay them. P. 151.

CHAP. XI. Of the great Happiness of all those who are Serious in Making and Renewing their Sacramental Vows, and sincere in Keeping them. P. 174.

CHAP. XII. Of the difficulty of living up to our Sacred Vows, with that exactness that we ought: With the Solution of some common cases relating thereto. P. 192.

CHAP. XIII. Directions that may help us to live more Correspondently to our many Solemn Sacramental vows. P. 214.

CHAP. XIV. Sundry Serious Considerations, to enforce the sense of our vows upon us, and engage us to pay them. P. 233.

CHAP. XV. The Temper and Carriage of a Soul that is rightly sensible of the Force and Sacredness of Sacramental vows, briefly Exemplified. P. 254.

CHAP. XVI. Of Particular vows. How they must be limited that they may be warrantable; and how far and in what cases they may be dispens'd with. P. 273.

CHAP. XVII. Of vows made in a time of Sickness, Distress, or Danger; and the sense of them that should be afterwards retain'd. P. 290.

A

A
Practical Discourse
CONCERNING
VOWS.

PSALM LVI. 12.

Thy Vows are upon me, O God.

The INTRODUCTION.

WHOEVER is conversant in
David's Psalms, will find
him frequently making
Vows, and careful in paying them.
When these words dropt from him,
he was just deliver'd out of a pressing
danger among the *Philistines*, with
whom he took Shelter from the Rage
B of

of King *Saul*, who unweariedly pursued him; but he soon found, that the remembrance of his past Achievements to their damage was still so fresh amongst them, and they so exasperated thereupon, that his Life was in constant Danger. In his Distress he flies to God his wonted Refuge, and sends up earnest Addresses to him, Vowing if he would open a way for his Deliverance out of these new Straits, he would shew his grateful sense of so Signal a Mercy, by the Exactness and Accuracy of his Future Obedience. God hears and Succours him, and works out an Escape for him; and he thereupon gratefully looks back, endeavours to renew the sense of his former Obligation to his great Deliverer, and to stir up himself to suitable Returns, and so cries out, *Thy Vows are upon me, O God.* i. e. I Resolve (*O Lord*) not to forget what was transacted while I was under my Fears. Thou hast heard my Cries, and I own my self firmly bound by my Vows. I was serious and in earnest when I made them, and I will endeavour to shew that I was so, by my care to perform them. *Thy Vows O God; made indeed on my part, but justly to be exacted on Thine: Are upon me;*

me ; They do in reality hold me fast, and I desire not to be released : I am sensible I deserve to be Stigmatiz'd for a Perfidious Wretch if I ever forget them.

THIS Temper of *Dauids*, with reference to the Vows he made on this occasion, should be ours with reference to all the Sacred Vows we any way come under. All Christians, as such, are necessarily under Vows to the Blessed God ; and particular Circumstances may make it expedient for us to come under Special Engagements to Him. But where-ever they are such as that they may justly be denominated *Vows of God* ; i. e. are such as his word will warrant ; we should make Holy *David*, as speaking in this Text, our Pattern, and set ourselves to imitate him, in seriously owning their binding Force, and endeavouring to answer and pay them. And on this account was this passage of Holy Writ, singled out as the Foundation of the ensuing Discourse, wherein the Elucidation of those Sacred Vows, whereby Men are bound to God, is the thing mainly intended.

C H A P. I.

Certain Preliminary Observations, concerning the NATURE and KINDS of Divine Vows.

THOSE who will be at the pains to look into Casuistical Writers,* will meet with a great many Nice Observations, and Curious Distinctions, under the Head of Vows, the recital whereof would tend more to puzzle than edify, and therefore I shall forbear transcribing them. I shall only, in order to the opening my way to what I intend, make the following Remarks, not affecting a Philosophical Accuracy, but aiming at the guarding against Pernicious Mistakes, and the avoiding Confusion.

1. 'TIS to God only that Vows are to be made. *David* sufficiently intimates it, in saying, *Thy Vows O God*; and again, *Vow and pay unto the Lord your God*. i. e. and to none else, which is plainly imply'd. Vowing is a part of Religious Worship. The making a Vow to any one, is an ascribing Divine Honour to him. It is a sort of Invocation, whereby we beg his help; and sometimes

* Let him who is dissatisfied consult Aquinas Sum. 2d 2d Qu. 88. Filiucius 1r. 26. C. 1. Sanchez l. 4. Moral. C. 1. Navar. C. 12. Azor. 1. p. l. 11. C. 13. &c.

concerning VOWS.

5

times it carries in it, an imprecation of Punishment, from him to whom 'tis made on the maker of it, if he wilfully breaks it. It includes also a Reposing of Trust and Confidence; and it many times supposes an Omniscience in him to whom it is addrest, it being made by meer Inward Thought, without any outward intimation or expression. On all which Accounts, the making Vows to Saints, which is so common in the *Roman Church*, is an unwarrantable Practice. It's an advancing them beyond their due pitch; and comes too near an equalling them with the Most High.

2. THAT is properly a Vow with reference to God, which is a promise among Men. When we have to do with Men like our selves, we promise to do this or that; and Equity and Veracity oblige us to be true to our Word. But a Vow which relates to God, carries in it a greater Solemnity, and hath a greater Force; by reason of his Supremence with whom we are therein concern'd; our Dependence on him, and his Power over us, he being able immediately to punish the least slight or neglect, which tends much to strike an Awe. A Vow therefore, *Is a Sac-*

cred Promise to God, whereby we bind our selves to him. It leaves no room for the alteration of our minds upon further thoughts and searches (as common *Purposes* and *Resolutions* do) unless flat Sinfulness or apparent Prejudice be discern'd. And if it hath an Imprecation attending it, 'tis the self-same thing with an Oath, whereby God is Invoked both as a Witness and a Revenger.

3. A Vow can never make that our Duty, that was Antecedently in it self Unlawful. Such a Vow is plainly Wicked, and therefore can't oblige. Vows are design'd to be *Incentives to Piety*, but can never be allow'd to be *Bands of Iniquity*. A Wicked Vow is to be Lamented and Repented of, and not Perform'd. For a Man would thereby oblige himself to what God had before absolutely prohibited ; to allow which, were to put it in our power to enervate any, even the most Essential Precepts of the Divine Law. They are Unhappy who fall into this Snare. For there's hazard in breaking such a Vow, altho' 'twould be a sin to keep it. There would be danger lest Persons breaking such a Vow, should diminish the force of Divine Bonds upon them, where they are really Obligatory. But to
keep

keep it, would to be sure be a direct thwarting the Divine Authority. Humble and Penitent Addresses to Heaven, may prevent the former ; but the latter, if persisted in when discover'd, is inexcusable ; whence its easily discernable which over-ballances. However such a Person, one that Vows things contrary to the *Divine Law*, either *Natural* or *Positive* ; cannot to be sure with *David*, look up and say, *Thy Vows O God* are upon me : For they are *his own Vows*, not *Gods*. He can't own, approve, or allow, but detests and abhors them.

4. A Vow may make that our Duty that was before Indifferent : By Indifferent, I mean such a thing as is in it self Lawful, but the Manner, Measure, Time, Degree, and other circumstances whereof are left to our Discretion, which being made the subject of a Vow, becomes plain Duty ; To make a Vow about such a thing, is Arbitrary ; but to keep it when made, Necessary : For such Vows bind our Consciences, and the keeping of them cannot be neglected without Sin : For instance ; I reckon it indifferent (*i. e.* left to the discretion of an honest Heart) how often we shall keep private Religious Fasts : But if I make a Vow that

A Practical Discourse

I'll keep one every Month, or once every Quarter ; it ceases to be Indifferent to me, and becomes my plain Duty ; from which nothing but Necessity can afford a Dispensation. It was Indifferent for *Ananias* to have sold or held his Possession : But when once by a Solemn Vow he had devoted it unto God, the keeping back any part of the Price in his own hands, was no less than Sacrilege. Some I know are too strait lac'd to assent to this Position ; but they'd find themselves hard put to it, to assign any just Reason, why a Man may not bind himself in Sacred as well as in Civil Matters, where the Divine Law lays no Curb or Restraint. As for the Limitations that should attend Vows of this kind, they may be seen in the Sixteenth Chapter of this Discourse.

5. A Solemn Vow, may and doth super-add a Force to the Obligation we might before be under to any thing as an unquestionable Duty : This the *Romanists* generally deny ; and *Bellarmino* particularly warmly opposes it : * It is their common Doctrine, That a thing due and necessary, cannot be the matter of a proper Vow to God : But it must always be something Indifferent and

* *Bellarmino*.
Disputat.
de Contro-
versis Tom
2. Lib. 2.
Cap 19.

and Arbitrary: But herein they are needlessly litigious: For was *Jacobs* Vow about a thing Indifferent, when he Vowed *The Lord should be his God*? Gen. 28. Was it not his Duty to own and honour God before he made that Vow? How then can their Doctrine hold? And why may not we be several ways bound and obliged to the same thing? A double is stronger than a single Cord; and a double Obligation more strongly binds. A Vow is no ~~more an~~ intimation, that the matter of it was not before a Duty, but when it was so, implies a sense of it, and is design'd to be a spur to it. When I Vow any thing that is Commanded, besides my Obligation to that which is the subject of my Vow, and the matter of my Duty, I am also under another Divine Obligation to keep my Vow: And I who was before oblig'd by God, do by my Vow oblige my self; and therefore a greater Penalty will be my due, if I now offend, than before: Which is so consonant both to Reason and Scripture, that it can't be contested by any who love not to strive about Words.

6. *DIVINE Vows* are of several sorts, and so are capable of different Consideration; they may be much diversify'd
by

by the different consideration, either of him to whom they are made, or of Us who come under them, or of their matter, or of the Circumstances that attend them.

1. AS for the Blessed God, to whom Vows are made, they may refer to him under several Notions: Either, *First*, As our Absolute Owner and Ruler and Chief Benefactor. Or, *Secondly*, As our Gracious Redeemer and Saviour from that Universal Ruin, that was the deserved fruit and effect of Mans Revolt and Apostacy. Or, *Thirdly*, As either desir'd to be, or actually being, our Temporal Deliverer and Preserver. Or, *Fourthly*, As the great Searcher of Hearts, Inspector of our Actions, and Universal Judge of the World. Which Notions of him to whom our Vows are address'd are so very different, that according as either of them is principally regarded, they must needs much alter them, in their Nature, Intent, Purport, and Consequences.

2. AS for us, who come under Vows to God, we may be considered, either as *Rational Creatures*, or as *Christians*, which makes a considerable difference: For tho' no Vows can become us under the latter, that are any way inconsistent with the former Notion; yet do those

those whereto the former obliges, fall far short of what the latter engages to: Nay further, as *Christians*, we may in this case be considered in our several different *Relations, Capacities, Stations,* and *Circumstances*, which may create no small difference in the *Vows* that respectively suit them: Nay we may be consider'd either as Acting for our selves, or as being bound by what's done by others: Which makes it necessary for us to allow of a Distinction between *Personal* and *Parental* Vows; the Vows of Parents having in some cases as real a binding force on their Children, as those wherein they actually engage themselves. As will appear in the Process of this Discourse.

3. THE Matter of our Vows may be different. Not to multiply Distinctions; that about which we go to make a Vow may be either *Necessary* or *Arbitrary*. We may either be oblig'd to it before, or left to our Liberty; which Liberty of ours we for our own Security, and that we may be at a fixed point, set Limits and Restraints to; which in many cases may be expedient, lest we err, either by excess on the one hand, or neglect on the other. Again, Vows of either kind, may be either *Positive*, or *Negative*;

Negative. ; according as we bind our selves either to the doing, or forbearance of any thing.

4. THE *Circumstances that may attend our Vows*, may be very different, by which they may be much diversify'd : 'Twould be to little purpose to mention the many Divisions into which they might be sort'd on that Account. Among others, they may make them either *Absolute* or *Conditional*; *Private* or *Solemn*; *Stated* or *Occasional*; *Temporary* or *Perpetual*; the difference whereof I need not explain: But there is one Division arising hence, which is into *Virtual* and *Explicit*, that needs a Remark. For a *Vow* may be impli'd where 'tis not positively exprest; it may be intimated by attendant Actions, where 'tis not expressly specifi'd. It was so heretofore in *Circumcision*. That Rite, contained in it a *Virtual Vow* of keeping the whole *Mosaick Law*; and it may be so in other cases. But generally Speaking the more express and particular we are in matters of this Nature, the clearer is our procedure, and the less danger is there of Mistakes or Failures, and the greater is the Awe that is likely to be thereby imprest.

BUT waving the many sortments
into

into which Divine Vows may be rank'd:
'Tis my design in the ensuing Discourse; *First*, Lightly to touch on the *General Vow*, whereby we devote our Selves and our All to the Great God, as our Absolute Owner and Proprietor, which all Rational Creatures, as such, are obliged to do: And then to proceed to the Consideration of the *Sacramental Vows* of Christians (which I principally had in my Eye in this Undertaking) whereby they are engag'd to an Hearty, Constant Devotedness to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; which Vows, with their attendant Solemnities, I shall distinctly open, and endeavour to inforce; doing my utmost to help my Readers, rightly to understand them, and to engage them faithfully to pay them. Whereto I shall subjoyn some brief Remarks on *Particular Vows*; shewing how they must be limited that they may be Warrantable; and in what cases they may be dispens'd with. To which an Account of *Sick-Bed Vows*, or such as are made in the time of Distress, together with a Sense of them that should be afterwards retain'd, being added; I think I shall have taken in all that is most Needful and Useful, where-
with

with this Subject of Vows could furnish me.

CHAP. II.

Of the General Vow, whereby all that we are and have, is sincerely Devoted to God, as our Absolute Owner and Proprietor.

AMONG the several sorts of Vows, whereby we are capable of binding our-selves to the Blessed God; that which first offers it self to our consideration, is a General or Universal One; whereby we, with a Sincere and Hearty Affection, Consecrate to him our-selves, and all that we are and have: Humbly Submitting all to his Will; and freely leaving it to him, to do with us, and all that's ours, as he sees good. Whereon I make the ensuing Observations.

1. A VOW of this sort all Rational Creatures are obliged to make. The Great God is our Maker, and constant Maintainer; the Owner and Donour of all we enjoy any delight or comfort in, or have any help and succour from, and therefore hath an indisputable right to do what he pleases with all. He retains the Propriety even where he gives us
the

the fullest Possession and freest Use ; and certainly may do what he will with his own : The Acknowledgement of this his Right, is our unquestionable Duty : which Acknowledgment can no way be so well made as by a Vow of this Nature. The Duty of Prayer indeed eyes God under the Notion of our Absolute Proprietor, and carries in it an Acknowledgment of this Right of his ; but not with that Engagement of a Return of suitable Duty that is imply'd in such a Vow ; which Engagement, is that which a due sense of Gods Right most naturally calls for, and necessarily demands. Would I here give my self scope (which my design'd brevity allows not) I could cite sundry Passages out of Heathen Writers * looking this way, that might convince Multitudes of Christians of a Shameful Neglect.

2. THIS Vow must be made Absolutely. We must not pretend to add any Limits, Clogs, or Conditions. But whatever comes, whatever we want, or how-ever we in any respect are dealt withal, we must engage to Acquiesce in the Will of God ; we must heartily give up ourSelves and our all to him, without any Restrictions. This Vow indeed when made

** Many of
sages to this
purpose are
obvious in
Epictetu,
& Arrian,
& Simplici-
us his Com-
ments on
him; in Se-
neca & An-
toninus, &
Maximus.
Tyrius, and
sundry o-
thers of the
same stamp.*

Gen. 28.
20. 21.

made by *Jacob*, seems to have a limitation annexed to it ; for we are told, That *Jacob Vowed a Vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to Eat, and Rayment to put on, so that I come again to my Fathers house in Peace : then shall the Lord be my God.* Then will I take him for my Portion, and give up my self and my all to him. Some may be apt to take this restrainedly ; as if *Jacob* meant, that unless God did so and so by him, he would not stand engag'd : But 'tis no such matter, he makes no such terms : For it may be observ'd, That God, in the 15th verse of this Chapter, had made *Jacob* a Promise of that of which he in this *Vow* of his intimates his desire : Being therefore assured God would deal so Mercifully with him, he engages himself anew, to that to which he was before oblig'd, from the consideration of this his design'd and assured Kindness. And tho' we read it *IF God will be with me, and keep me, &c.* yet we might as well turn it, *SEEING God will be with me and do so and so to me ;* I am therefore the more obliged to give up my self to him, which Obligation, I'll carefully endeavour to Answer. So that there remains not
the

the least shadow of a Limitation or Condition in *Jacobs* Vow; nor should there in any Vows of ours of the same Nature.

3. **THIS** Vow is seldom heartily made by any, till some Awakening Providence produces a lively Conviction of their entire Dependance on the Almighty. I say, *seldom*, not *never*; by reason there are Extraordinary Persons and Cases; but I am satisfied they are not often to be met with. We hear not of *Jacobs* making such a Vow while he was at home, in his Fathers House, and in his Mothers Arms; while he lived there free from Cares and Fears; but when he was forc'd to flye to save his Life, and put to shift for himself in the wide World, he then seriously reflects upon his absolute Dependence on God, and the need he stood in of his Protection and Care, which put him upon making the Vow before mentioned: And I verily believe, There are few that seriously and in earnest make the like Vow, that are not by some Trouble, Distress, or Difficulty, convinc'd of the Necessity of it: Which is a sad instance of the prevailing disingenuity of Humane Nature.

4. When such a Vow is once Seriously

C

ously

ously made, it must needs much influence the after Life. It may be made from the Teeth outward, and produce no considerable Effects: But where this Affair is manag'd with any degree of that Seriousness that suits a matter of such Importance; it cannot but command the stated Temper and Carriage. Those that were in earnest when they made such a Vow, must necessarily be Contented and Patient, Submissive and Resigned to the will of God; without giving way to Fretting, Murmuring, or Repining; Careful to employ all for God which they have Devoted to him; and often mindful of their future Account. Allowance must indeed be made for that mixture of Corruption, and those Weaknesses, Failures and Defects, that are observable in the best: But thus it must be with them in a prevailing degree.

5. A Due sense of such a Vow, lays a Foundation for a Solid Peace, in all estates and conditions of Life. What can disturb those that thus Stay themselves on God; and are bent and determin'd to acquiesce in his Pleasure? They have put themselves in his hands, and so are out of the reach of many of those things that are most apt to Ruffle
and

and Shatter us. They lye at Anchor and are Safe, in the midst of the greatest Storms and Tempests. They have a Refuge at hand in the Greatest Troubles, whither they may flye and be Secure. While they can keep their hold of him to whom they have Devoted themselves and their all, they need never be at a loss; they can have no just occasion for Tormenting Anxiety, or Sinking Fears.

6thly and Lastly, THIS Vow may and should be repeated, upon certain Occasions, in order to our Excitation, Confirmation and Support. Suppose we meet with any Uncommon Troubles; are Exercised with variety of Tryals successively; are under a complicated Affliction, that hath been Long and Burdensome; or in any other cases that need not be Specifi'd, when we find our Faith weakned; our Patience almost tir'd, and our Hope sinking (which hath been the case of many of Gods Dearest and most Faithful Servants) we should do well to renew this Vow, and that with all the Seriousness and Solemnity we are able; which would be as likely a means as any to Excite our Languishing Vigour, Confirm our Faith, Support our Hope, and

help us to that Comfort, which none can have such just grounds to expect, as those who are the Faithful Devoted Ones, of the Lord most High.

CHAP. III.

Of Sacramental VOWS.

VOWS of all sorts are Sacred and Awful Things, but none so Tremenduous, as those which are attended with *Sacramental Solemnities*; in which, both Gods Promises, and Mans Purposes, are by sensible signs and external actions, Represented, Ratified and Establish'd: We had need therefore take care rightly to understand them, because our Lives are to be constantly Govern'd by them.

THE Christian Vow (*i. e.* The Vow which our Holy Profession, as such, engages us in) is of all others the most Weighty and Important, the most Sacred and Inviolable: 'Tis that wherein all, both Young and Old, that name the Name of Christ, are most nearly concern'd; no less a matter than the Life or Death of their Immortal Souls, depending on the faithful keep-
ing

ing, or perfidious breaking of it: Which consideration, should methinks, command a Serious Regard to what is laid down in order to its Explication, from all that are not utterly Stupid and Senseless.

THAT I may be as Clear and Distinct as I can, I'll *First*, Consider *Sacramental Vows* more generally; and then, *Secondly*, Consider the *Christian Vow*, as made in each of the Instituted Sacraments, more particularly.

WHAT is most needful, in order to the opening the general nature of *Sacramental Vows*, is comprehended in the following Propositions.

I. V O W S have ever been an Essential part of Covenant Transactions between God and Man. It hath pleas'd the Great God, whose Right to Command us is Absolute and Uncontroulable, so far to Condescend, as to Treat with Man in a Covenant Way: That is to say, He doth not meerly exert his Authority in Commanding, but hath pitcht on a way of Mutual Agreement. His Language to us might have been of this Nature; *Do this and that, and whatever I think fit to enjoin, upon pain of my utmost Displeasure; Do it, or I'll severely punish you; Do it, or I'll come forth*

in an Hostile manner, and Fight against you till I have quite Consum'd you ; Do what I require, or expect the Severest Treatment that's possible from an Angry God ; and so he might have exacted Duty of us, upon a Terrible Penalty Threatned, without any Promise annexed. But he delights not in acting upon meer Prerogative ; and hath therefore tempered his Authority and Sovereignty with great Sweetness and Beneficence ; still treating with us upon Gracious Terms. Do you (says he to us) thus and thus ; and such and such shall be my Carriage ; be you careful of your Duty, and I'll afford you my Favour ; and give you this and that, and the other mark of it. Behold, says God to us, I am ready to Bless you : But as ever you expect I should do it, I expect you should do what I command you. This is a Covenant Form of Dealing ; in which there are suppos'd to be Blessings Promis'd on Gods part, and Duties required on ours ; which Duties are pre-requir'd to the actual Enjoyment of the Blessings promis'd. When a Covenant therefore is enter'd into between God and Man, as there is a Stipulation on Gods part of the Blessings promis'd ; so is there suppos'd to be a Vow on Mans part, of the Duty requir'd ;

requir'd: And this Vowing is an Essential part of every such Covenant. 'Tis the end of every Covenant to bring us nearer to God; 'tis in order to it that he makes us such Promises: Now a Serious and Sincere Vow on our part, is the Band. 'Tis that properly that binds us to God; and consequently engages him to make good his general Promises to us in Particular.

WE may observe therefore a Vow in all Covenants between God and Man. Thus we find God entering into Covenant with *Abraham*. Gen. 17. *I will make my Covenant between me and thee*, says God to him. verse 2. The particular Promises of this Covenant on Gods part, you have verse 6, 7, 8. *I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, and thy Seed after thee, in their Generations, for an Everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee: And I will give unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee, the Land of Canaan.* This was it, that God engag'd to: Now there must further be something requir'd by God to be engag'd to on *Abraham's* part, or else 'twould be a meer Promise, and not a Covenant. What

A Practical Discourse

that was, we see *verse 10.* *This is my Covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy Seed after thee, every Man-Child among you shall be Circumcised.* This God makes *Abrams* Duty, as ever he expected he should make good his Word and fulfil his Promises. This therefore *Abraham* in entering into Covenant with God, Solemnly Vow'd; and he kept his Vow; for that very day he Circumcis'd all the Males in his Family; and he left it as as his Command to his Posterity in all Successive Generations, to Circumcise their Children when they were Eight Days old; which they punctually obey'd. So also afterwards, when God enter'd into a National Covenant with the whole Body of the *Israelites*, as he did at *Mount Sinai*: He, *First*, Lays before them their duty with reference to Morals, *Exod. 20.* And as to Judicial and Ceremonial Matters: *Chap. 21, 22.* and part of the *23.* And so gives them a full and particular account of what he expected from them: And then he proceeds to tell them, what he would do for them; and makes them a great many Promises of Peculiar Kindness; from *verse 23*, of *Chap. 23*, to the end. He engages, if they would be

Obe,

Obedient, to guide them in their Way, to drive out their Enemies before them, to bring them safe into the Land promi'd to their Fathers, and there Preserve and Bless them. This being done, the actual Covenanting follows. *Chap. 24. 7, 8.* Consisting of a Solemn Vow on the part of all the People, and a confirming Rite on *Moses's* part, as Gods Representative. *And he took* (says the Text) *the Book of the Covenant* (i. e. the Law forementioned, the matter of of the Covenant they were entring into) *and read in the Audience of the People: And they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be Obedient.* Here we see all the People, as one Man, expressly Vowing Obedience to the whole Law. And then (it follows) *Moses took the Blood and Sprinkled it on the People, and said, Behold the Blood of the Covenant, which the Lord hath made with you, concerning all these words.* They having first by a Solemn Vow, bound themselves to God, and to Obedience to him, *Moses* by Gods command, uses the External Sign of Sprinkling Blood, to show that God lookt on his Promises as binding upon him.

Now under the New Testament, there are two Fœderal Transactions
between

between *God* and us. Instituted as Ordinances in the Christian Church, to which we commonly give the Name of Sacraments; in both which, we may observe the same Procedure. Both are on *Gods* part seals of the Blessings of the Covenant of *Grace*; and on Man's part Engagements to all the Duties of that Covenant. As *Gods* part lies in Promises, and their Ratifications and Assuring Pledges; so doth Man's in Vows, and their Confirming Rites. *God* engages to be our *God*, and to carry it to us like a *God*: We Vow to be his People, and to carry it to him like his People. *God* engages to make good his Promises not only in the general, but to those Persons in Particular, who seriously enter into Covenant with him: Man is thereby bound and engag'd to all Prescribed Duty, not only in general and in common with others, but Particularly and by Name.

2. The Christian Vow, in both the Sacraments of the New Testament, hath a particular Relation to *God* the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*, according to their distinct Agency in the great Work of our Redemption and Salvation. Each Person in the Sacred Trinity, hath an hand in Saving Man: The
work

work of each is distinct ; and therefore the Duty to each is distinct ; and consequently the Christian Vow, must besides what is owing to the Great God in common, contain an Engagement to the special Duties owing to each Person.

TO the *Father* we find in Scripture, the Honour is peculiarly Ascrib'd, of being the Contriver of the Method of our Salvation. 'Twas He whose Love to us was such, as to move him to send his Son to Redeem us, and his Spirit to Sanctify us. 'Twas He that sent his Son in our Nature, to Dye a Sacrifice, and make Expiation for Sin ; and 'tis He that sends his Spirit to apply and convey the Benefits Merited by the Oblation of that Sacrifice. 'Twas the *Father* that Invested Christ the Mediator with his Authority and Power : 'Tis on the *Father* (as maintaining the Rights of the whole Deity) Man's Apostacy is Represented as peculiarly Reflecting : And 'tis He who thro' his Son, offers to be Reconcil'd to a Rebellious World. He is the *Father* of our Lord *Jesus Christ* ; and in and thro' him, Ready to be our *Father*. 'Tis back again to him that Christ Dy'd to bring us ; He is therefore to be regarded as our Ultimate End.

AC-

ACCORDINGLY ; that part of the Christian Vow, which relates to God the *Father*, is this: Admiring his Matchless Wisdom, and Adoring his Unfathomable Love, to give up our selves to him anew, with hearty Sorrow that ever we should have Revolted from him: To take him for our *Father* thro' Christ, engaging to carry it like Children to him; with a Child-like Love to him, Reverential Fear and Worship of him, Delight, Trust, and Confidence in him, Hearty Dependence on him, and Obedience to him: to make his Glory our utmost Aim, and expect our Final Happiness in him alone.

AS for the *Son*, He is represented as the Worker out of our Redemption: 'Twas he who Purchas'd our Pardon, and paid the price of our Peace. He is the Fathers Prime Messenger to this Lower World; the Great Prophet of the Church; sent on purpose to Reveal Gods Mind and Will to Men, and instruct them in the way to Heaven. He was constituted the Great High Priest, to make Atonement, Satisfie Offended Justice, and Salve the Injur'd Rights of the Divine Government; to Expiate Sin, by Offering an Acceptable Sacrifice,

fice, and to Interceed with the Blood of it within the Veil, in the Holy of Holies, in the Heavenly Tabernacle. Him hath God set as his King on *Zion*; and to him is every knee to Bow, and him are all to Honour, even as they do the Father: For he hath put all Power in Heaven and Earth into his Hands: 'Tis on his Shoulders the Divine Government lies; and to him it belongs to give Laws to his Church. He was a walking Mirrour of Divinity in this Lower World, being *Emanuel*, God with us; a compleat Pattern of the Perfection of Holyness. He is the Captain of our Salvation; the Skilful Physician of Souls; the Light of the World; the way to the Father, and the Lord of Life: And he will come again at last, to raise us from Death, and Judge the World, and Justifie his Saints, and bring them to Eternal Glory, and cast the Wicked into utter Misery.

AND accordingly that part of the Christians Sacramental Vows that relates to *God the Son*, is this: Admiring his Amazing Condescention and Matchless Love, in taking our Nature upon him, with its many Infirmities, and therein doing, undergoing, and Suffering

fering so much for our sakes ; to Consecrate our selves to him ; firmly Resolving (with Divine Assistance) that we will not live unto our selves, but to him who Dy'd for us, and Rose again. 'Tis an hearty taking him for our Saviour ; closing in with all the parts of his Saving Office. An engagement readily to hearken to his Voice, by whom God who in times past, spake to the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us. To Credit all his Reports ; and Trust in all his Promises ; to depend solely on his Atonement for Pardon and Divine Acceptance, Justification and Life ; to use him upon all occasions as our Advocate, who sits in our Nature at the Right hand of the Throne of the Majesty on high. It is a swearing Fidelity to him as our Sovereign ; engaging to yield Submission to his Authority and Governing Power ; to stand in awe of all his Threatnings, and sincerely obey all his Commands : To Immitate his Example ; and endeavour to copy out in ours, the Excellencies and Perfections of his Temper and of his Life : To follow him as our Captain whithersoever he shall lead us : To Fight under his Banner against all his Enemies ; and

to bear all his Discipline : To use him as our Physician, Trusting in his Skill, following all his Prescriptions, and chearfully taking all his Saving Medicines, how bitter and distastful soever to Flesh and Blood : To wait in expectation of his return in Glory ; and live in the comfortable hope of his coming to Judgment, and owning us before his Father and all his Holy Angels ; and taking us to himself, to be for ever with him beholding his Glory.

AS for the *Holy Ghost*, his work is to supply our Saviours Place here on Earth ; to be the Guide and the Inmate, the Helper and Assistant, the Comforter and Support of all the Faithful : To apply all the Benefits that our Lord hath Purchas'd. 'Twas he that Inspir'd all the Penmen of Holy Writ ; and 'twas under his peculiar conduct that they committed the Sacred Records to Writing, for the use of the Church in all Ages : 'Twas he that gave such convincing Evidence of the Truth of Christianity at first, by Innumerable, Open and Uncontroulable Miracles, in order to the first Introducing it into the World, and the confirming the Faith of it in all after times ; and 'tis he that hath been giving his Testimony to the Truth thereof in all
suc-

ucceeding Ages, even down to this very day, in producing the Saving Effects thereof on Mens Hearts, notwithstanding so much, such united and such vigorous Opposition. 'Tis his office to Illuminate, convince of Sin, Righteousness and Judgement; to Quicken, Strengthen, Comfort, Succour, Guard, and Enliven, and Seal unto the day of Redemption. He is the Author of all saving Light and Grace; and the first spring of every good Work; the Beginner, Maintainer, and Encreaser of the Spiritual Life, and Issuer of it in that that will be Eternal.

AND accordingly that part of a Christians *Sacramental Vows* that relates to God the Holy Ghost, is a serious engagement to use him as our *Saviours* Deputy in all the parts of his Office; to take the Holy Scriptures as of his Inspiration, as the rule of our Faith and Life; and to adhere to that Religion, the Truth whereof he hath so many ways attested: Earnestly to implore his help and assistance; and carefully to use it when given: to keep our Minds open to his Light; to yield to his Convictions, and comply with his Motions; to hearken to his Voice and follow his Conduct; to wait humbly for him in all ways of
Divine

Divine Appointment ; to depend upon his Aids ; to receive his Comforts ; and by Strength derived from him, to be continually walking in the way of Holiness towards Everlasting Happiness. Thus are each of the Persons in the Trinity distinctly concern'd in our *Sacramental Vows*.

3. OUR *Sacramental Vows* summarily comprehend the whole of our Religion. A great Noise and Stir there hath been in the World about *Fundamentals* ; fierce and earnest have been the Disputes among the Learned about the number and nature of them ; and various have been the ways pitcht on to determine what points are absolutely Necessary, and what not : But when all's done, the Christian Covenant, which in Baptism is Initiated, and afterwards at the Lords Table renew'd, confirm'd and ratifi'd ; would, if rightly consider'd, give us the clearest Notions of the great Essentials of our Holy Religion. All the great Principles of our Faith, are comprehended under the distinct Agency of God the Father, Son and Spirit, in bringing about our Salvation and Happiness, to which our *Sacramental Vows* have a direct Reference

D

rence

rence, as appears from the former head: And as for the Practical part of our Religion, no Essential of that can be wanting in them, since they take in the whole compass of our Duty. The whole Moral Law, which always was, is and will be the Rule of Duty, is reducible to two Heads: The Love of God and our Neighbour. As for the Love of God, that is to be express'd by a serious Acknowledgement of him, and renouncing all that would rival it with him; an hearty zeal for his Worship, and his Name; and a punctual Sanctifying of that Portion of time he hath consecrated for himself. And if we heartily Love our Neighbours, we shall be ready to do to them, as we would have them in like Circumstances do to us; to give all the respect to any that is due to their place; and to be tender of the Life, Chastity, Goods and Name, of all we have to do with; and never envy their Prosperity: To all which our *Sacramental Vows* are Solemn Engagements: And so are they also to all those Duties, which our Blessed Saviour, hath in the Gospel peculiarly enforced; as Self-denial, Mortification, the taking up of our Cross; giving and forgiving

giving Charity; Relieving the Poor, Succouring the Distressed, and helping the Neccessitous; forgiving Injuries without Retaliating, or giving way to Revenge; Unity and Peace and the like. Would we therefore have a compleat and full, a distinct and clear and comprehensive Idea of our whole Religion; would we take it in at one view, that we may the better discern its Excellency, Order and Beauty, and be the more Enamoured with it, let us turn our eyes to the Christian Covenant, to our *Sacramental Vows*, and there we may have it.

4. THE Obligation and Binding Force of *Sacramental Vows*, is Perpetual and can never cease. The Acts themselves may be quickly perform'd, and soon over: But their Obligation will last as long as our lives. Some sorts of *Vows* may cease to be binding; when the reason of them ceases, or a greater Duty would be hinder'd, or a greater danger Incurr'd, or the like: But none of these things can happen as to those our *Vows* that are attended with *Sacramental Solemnities*. Perseverance and Constancy in our Duty to the last, is one part of the matter of those *Vows*: For we do therein engage, not only that we'll be Faithful and Dutiful and Obe-

dient in the general, but that we'll persist and hold on in our Duty, whatsoever it costs us, and whatever troubles or difficulties we meet withal: That by the strength of God we won't flinch nor give way; that if we fail, we'll be Sorry and Repent, and Divine Grace assisting us, to our work again; and so doing hold out to the last; till in fighting the good fight of Faith, we have finish'd our course, and so come to lay hold on Eternal Life.

CHAP. IV.

Of the BAPTISMAL VOW. The Sum of it in Form, as made by Persons Baptiz'd when ADULT.

BAPTISM was Instituted by our Blessed Lord as a Sacred Rite, whereby Persons were to be first Initiated into the Christian Covenant: And be it sooner or later Administred, it carries in it an Obligation to all the duties of that Covenant, on which its Blessings, are suspended. In Baptism there is always either exprest or imply'd a *Vow* of hearty compliance with all the demands of our Holy Religion; without which
suppos'd,

suppos'd, the pouring on of Water, in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, by the Minister as Gods Representative, would be utterly Unavailable either to seal or convey those Inestimable Gospel Blessings of Pardon and Peace, Adoption, and a Right to Life. But this *Vow* must be differently consider'd by all that would avoid Confusion, according to the *Different state of the Subjects of Baptism*; which are either Persons *Adult*, that are come to years of Understanding, and so are capable of transacting Personally for themselves; or the *Children* of Christian Parents in their Infant State. The case of the former is the subject of this; and that of the latter, of the following Chapter.

ADULT Persons before they are Baptiz'd, ought seriously to consider, what Christianity will oblige them to, and to reckon their costs before hand, that they may come under so Solemn an Engagement as Baptism carries in it, understandingly, deliberately, and with full consent of Heart, that there may be no danger of after drawing back.

THE Vow which they in their Baptism actually, and voluntarily, make and come under, is of this Tenour, and may be drawn up in Form thus;

“ I Believe in an Eternal Infinitely
“ Glorious God, who made Heaven and
“ Earth : and in *Jesus Christ* his only
“ Son, who Redeem’d Mankind from
“ Misery and Wrath : And in the Ever
“ Blessed *Spirit*, the Fountain of all *Grace*
“ and Peace.

“ TO this God the Father, Son and
“ Spirit, I willingly, freely, and chear-
“ fully consecrate my self. For I am
“ sensible God is my Owner and Propri-
“ etor ; to him therefore I make an Ab-
“ solute Resignation of my self, and all
“ that is or ever shall be mine as his own ;
“ engaging to use my self, and all that
“ I have as his, and contentedly to rest
“ in all his Disposals. And it being my
“ Rectitude and Happiness to Obey and
“ Please Him, I’ll labour to bring both
“ my Soul and Body into the most Ab-
“ solute Subjection to him, and to make
“ it my Delight and Business sincerely
“ and exactly to Obey Him. I’ll Love
“ Him with my whole Heart and Soul,
“ and Mind and Might ; and quiet my
“ self in his Love and Faithfulness,
“ whatever shall befall me in the World.
“ I’ll lead a Life of Thankfulness to him
“ for his Innumerable Benefits, and en-
“ deavour to Glorify him with the esti-
“ mation of my Mind, the Praises of
“ my

“ my Mouth, and the Holiness of my
“ Life and Conversation.

“ WITH Humble Thankfulness I
“ Adore my Dearest Saviour for his Re-
“ deeming Love ; and on his Merits I’ll
“ bottom all my hopes of Pardon, Justi-
“ fication and Eternal Life : I am hear-
“ tily griev’d for all my Sins, and sensi-
“ ble they would undo me without his
“ help and interposition ; to him there-
“ fore I flye as my City of Refuge ; Him
“ I resolve constantly to use as the means
“ of my Souls access to God, acceptance
“ with him, and help and comfort from
“ him ; and I’ll entertain no thoughts
“ of coming to the Father but by him,
“ And he being the great Prophet and
“ Teacher of his Church, I’ll humbly
“ wait as a Scholar in his School, to
“ learn of him by his Spirit, Word, and
“ Ministers, the further knowledge of
“ God and of the things that tend to my
“ Salvation ; and this with an honest,
“ willing, and teachable Mind ; in
“ Faith, Dilligence, Obedience, Pati-
“ ence and Peace. I now swear Fealty
“ to him as my Lord and King ; and
“ Vow sincere Obedience to all his Ho-
“ ly Laws and Commandments, I’ll
“ Imitate him as my Pattern ; and write
“ after the Copy that he hath set me,

“ both as to my Temper and my Life. I’ll
 “ use him as the Great Physician of
 “ Souls, and take all his saving Medi-
 “ cines, how unpleasing and distastful
 “ soever. I’ll follow him as the Cap-
 “ tain of my Salvation, whithersoever
 “ he shall lead me ; and spend my days
 “ in a Vigilant, Resolute, and Constant
 “ War, against the Flesh, the World,
 “ and the Devil.

“ FOR I renounce the Flesh that is Na-
 “ turally pleas’d with Sin, and impati-
 “ ent of Necessary Confinements ; I re-
 “ nounce Self as my end : I also re-
 “ nounce the World, which is so apt to
 “ administer Food and Fuel to my Lusts ;
 “ I renounce all that in it wherewith
 “ the Carnal part is gratifi’d ; as Mat-
 “ ters of Pleasure, Profit, or Honour ;
 “ not regarding them as means to my
 “ Happiness : I renounce the Devil and
 “ all subjection to him ; ’tis Christ the
 “ Lord of Life to whom I’ll look, ’tis
 “ his Subject I resolve to be.

“ I’ll Humbly, Earnestly, Daily, Im-
 “ plore the help and assistance of the
 “ Blessed Spirit of Grace ; that he
 “ may reside in me, and be the Life of
 “ my Soul ; and by the help of God, I
 “ wont Resist or Quench him, but
 “ thank-

“thankfully Obey him. The Scrip-
 “tures by him Inspir’d, I take for the
 “Rule of my Faith and Life, and en-
 “gage to keep close to : And Christi-
 “anity, to the Truth whereof he so ma-
 “ny ways hath set his Seal, is the Reli-
 “gion I’ll profess, thereto I’ll adhere,
 “and therein alone expect Salvation.
 “On the assistance of this Blessed Spirit
 “alone, shall be all my dependence in
 “the Christian Life ; and his Conduct
 “I’ll follow thro’ all Difficulties and
 “Temptations, in the way of Holiness
 “towards Everlasting Happiness.

“FOR it shall be my constant endea-
 “vour to adorn the Doctrine of God my
 “Saviour in all things, by living Sober-
 “ly, Righteously, and Godlily in this pre-
 “sent World. I’ll do my Gracious God
 “all the service, and others all the good
 “I can, in works of Piety, Justice, and
 “Charity, with Prudence, Fidelity, In-
 “dustry, Zeal and Delight ; like one
 “that knows ’tis God that intrusts me
 “with all my Talents, of the Improve-
 “ment whereof I must give a strict Ac-
 “count. I’ll be careful to render unto
 “all their dues ; Tribute to whom Tri-
 “bute is due ; Custom to whom Cu-
 “stom, Fear to whom Fear, and Honour
 “to whom Honour ; and to owe no
 “Man

"Man any thing but Love: And that is
 "a Debt which I'll be continually pay-
 "ing by all suitable expressions of Af-
 "fection and Tenderneſs to all I have
 "to do with; eſpecially thoſe to whom
 "Nature or Providence hath peculiarly
 "link'd me. I'll Love all that have the
 "ſame Nature with my ſelf; but more
 "eſpecially who are Children with me
 "of the ſame Heavenly Father; Mem-
 "bers of the ſame Body, and Heirs of
 "the ſame Inheritance: And in general
 "I'll make this my Rule, to do to others
 "as I would my ſelf be done unto. I'll
 "carefully put away from me all Wrath,
 "Anger, and Clamour, and beware of
 "all Violent Paſſion. I'll keep at the
 "greateſt diſtance from any ſort of
 "Lewdneſs or Wantonneſs; I'll hate
 "and abhor all Lying and Slandering,
 "Backbiting and Detracting; and by
 "the Grace of God never ſuffer my ſelf
 "to envy my Neighbours Proſperity, or
 "Rejoyce in his Adverſity: But I will
 "be Pittiful and Courteous, Tender-
 "hearted and Compaſſionate; I'll Re-
 "lieve the Neceſſitous, Feed the Hun-
 "gry, Cloath the Naked, Entertain
 "Strangers, and viſit the Sick and the
 "Imprison'd, as I have ability and op-
 "portunity, which are things my
 "Bleſſed

“ Blessed Lord hath testifi’d are very
 “ acceptable and pleasing to him. I’ll
 “ faithfully endeavour to fill up all my
 “ places and Relations with suitable
 “ prescribed Duty ; and to employ all
 “ my Trusts for God. I’ll be orderly in
 “ in his Church, and therein submit to
 “ all his Discipline, and endeavour to
 “ keep the Unity of the Spirit in the
 “ Bond of Peace. I’ll maintain no
 “ Grudges against any ; but when in-
 “ jur’d, will be ready to forgive, as God
 “ (I hope) for Christs sake will forgive
 “ me. I’ll take up my Cross whenever
 “ call’d to it, and rather forsake all things
 “ than desert my God and Saviour.

“ And since my Weakness is such,
 “ as that let me do my best, I shall often
 “ stumble and fall ; whenever I do so,
 “ I’ll renew my Repentance, and Divine
 “ Grace enabling me, return again to
 “ my Obedience.

“ AND since it hath pleas’d my
 “ Dearest Saviour to Institute a standing
 “ Memorial in his Church, of his Death
 “ and Passion, to be Solemnized by all
 “ who pretend to be his Followers ; I
 “ do therefore Solemnly Vow and Pro-
 “ mise, with an Humble Penitent and
 “ Believing Heart, to come unto his Ta-
 “ ble when I am invited and call’d :
 “ And

“ And to joyn in that Sacred Solemnity,
 “ that I may thereby testifie my Union
 “ with the Church, my Charity for all,
 “ and my Thankfulness to Christ ; And
 “ will never forget his Unspeakable Love
 “ to my poor Soul, manifested in his
 “ Sacrifice of Everlasting Vertue ; and
 “ will hope according to the Integrity
 “ of my Heart, that tho’ my Failings
 “ be many, yet he will encrease my Gra-
 “ ces and Heavenly Comforts upon my
 “ waiting upon him therein.

“ AND in the keeping of this my
 “ Vow, and acting agreeably thereunto,
 “ I Resolve, by the Assistance of that
 “ Grace which God hath promis’d, to
 “ Persevere and hold on to the end of
 “ my days ; Living in the constant ex-
 “ pectation of Death, Judgment, and
 “ Eternity, and my Lords Return.

THIS is the Nature and Purport of
 that Vow or Engagement which Chri-
 stianity obliges all its Adult Votaries
 freely to come under : And this is the
 substance of all our Religion.

I Appeal to all (that will take the
 pains to read and review it) Whether
 this Vow thus drawn up, contains any
 thing unreasonable ? Whether there is
 not the highest Reason running thro’ it ?
 Whether any Branch of it is liable to
 any

any just Exceptions? Whether those who refuse to come under it, or being under it, to obey it, are not Enemies to themselves, as well as to God? Whether it contains any thing impossible to a willing Mind? And whether it would not be happy for the World, and reflect a great Lustre upon Religion, if it were faithfully and punctually kept by all that are under it?

HERE I desire it may be Observ'd.

1. THAT it was much more usual for Persons first to come under this Vow in Baptism in an Adult State, in the Primitive Church than in after times. For when Christianity first made its entrance, it found the World in possession of sundry Religions; in which those of that Age were bred up, and in the practice whereof they persisted, till they were better inform'd by Gospel Light; which spreading and diffusing it self far and wide, insinuating it self into Mens minds, and carrying its own convictive evidence along with it, which was back'd by the Miraculous Power then resident in the Church, brought in Proselytes in abundance, from *Judaism* and *Gentilism*, in all its Forms to Christianity in a full age; till which time therefore they were incapable of being Baptiz'd,

tiz'd, and coming under the Vow foregoing : But when Christianity having jostled out its Rival Religions came to be fixt and settled, Parents generally thought it their Duty to get their Childrens Names inscrib'd in the Christian Roll from their Infancy, and to enter them into a Sacred Bond to be the Lords in Baptism, and actually did so: So that afterwards none remain'd to be Baptiz'd when Adult, but either those whose Parents neglected to devote them to the Lord by that Sacred Rite, in their Infant state ; or those who were themselves Profelyted to Christianity after they came to Maturity ; which after the three or four first Ages of the Church were all along comparatively few.

2. THAT the more publicly this Vow is made by those who are Baptiz'd when Adult, 'tis so much the better. In the Primitive Church 'twas generally in the face of a Christian Assembly that this Affair was transacted and tho' it cannot be justly pretended that its validity at all depends upon the publickness of it, yet is it unquestionable that its ends will be thereby the better answer'd : It makes it much more Solemn ;
there

there will be the more Witnesses, who may be afterwards Monitors if there be occasion; and the greater Force will it probably have, and the greater is the *Ave* that is likely to be thereby imprest.

3. THAT this Vow is by no means to be confin'd to the *Adult*: But even those who are Baptiz'd when *Infants*, are as much concern'd in it. For (1.) their Infant Dedication to God in Covenant, obliges them to stand to and keep this Vow as much as if 'twere Personally made in their first Consecration. And (2.) Their Infant Baptism obliges them actually to make a Vow of this Nature when they come to Age, and so are capable of Personal Covenanting for themselves. Which matters will receive no small light from the following Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the Baptifmal Vow, as to thofe Baptiz'd in Infancy. An Account of the diftinct concern of Parents and Children in it; and a diftinct Addrefs to each concerning the Duty thence resulting.

TH O' the cafe of Perfons Baptiz'd when *Adult* be more clear, yet is that of thofe Baptiz'd in Infancy much more common in the days we live in; and fo it hath been in the Church now for feveral Ages. Tho' the Obligation of the former by the Baptifmal Vow be more immediate, and therefore more obvious and fenfibly discernable, yet is that of the latter, as fully and fufficiently evident, if rightly ftated.

I defign not to run out into Difputes; and fhall therefore take that for granted which fo many Eminent Perfons of all Professions have fo Laborioufly and Clearly Prov'd, *viz.* That it is the Duty of all Chriftian Parents to enter their Children, while Infants, into the Vifible Church, and the Chriftian Covenant, by Baptifm, and fo from the firft to bring them under the *Vow* foregoing.

going. I lay that down here as a *Postulat-um*; and take it to be but a reasonable one: And supposing it evident, shall set my self to show what Apprehensions we are to form of the Engagement which such Baptiz'd Infants come under, and of the manner of their coming under it. And here I think it undeniable, That as 'tis in the Parents right, that Infants are admitted to Baptism, so 'tis by their engagement, that they are brought under the Vow, which that Solemnity carries in it. That we may be clear in this matter therefore, it is needful distinctly to consider,

1. THE part and work of Parents in Devoting their Children to God, and bringing them under the Baptismal Vow.

2. THE concern of Children in what upon that occasion is done by their Parents for them, and on their behalf. And

3. THE Parents *Power* to bring them, and the Childrens *Capacity* of being brought, under such an Obligation as the Baptismal Vow.

1. AS for the part and work of Parents in Devoting their Children to God, and bringing them under the Baptismal Vow; that is compriz'd under the following Particulars.

E

1. THEY

1. THEY disclaim all Right to their Children that is inconsistent with Gods Absolute Propriety; and Resign them as a part of themselves, entirely to his Management and Disposal. From him they receiv'd them, and to him they return them, begging his acceptance of them for his own.

2. THEY bring them to God for his Blessing; and hold them up before him, with earnest desires that these little parts of themselves, may be not only under his Providential Care, but under the entail of his Covenant Love. As they embrace that Covenant which the Gospel offers for themselves, so is it also their earnest request, that their Children may partake of the Inestimable Blessings of it; in order whereto, they bring them to receive the Instituted Seal of the Covenant; that so that *Promise* (of Pardon, Favour, Grace, and Mercy) which is to *their Children* as well as *them*; may actually reach them.

Acts 2.39.

3. THEY consent for their Children, to all Gods claims and demands; and bind them (if they live) to all the Duties of the Covenant, as ever they expect or desire they should share in the Blessings of it. That their Children shall

shall eventually live in Gods Fear, and walk in his ways, and carry it as his Devoted Servants, is not in the power of the best of Parents to promise; that can only be brought about by the aid of Divine Grace, which is not at their dispose: But having a natural power and right to judge for them, and act for them, till they become capable of judging and acting for themselves; they consent on their behalf to the Justness and Equity of the Covenant's demands, and engage for them to a compliance therewith; and so bring them under a Vow of the same nature with that before recited, with reference to the *Adult*, its Personality only excepted.

4. THESE Children being born in Christ's Family, to which their Parents belong, they bring them to his Authoriz'd Representative, that they may be Enroll'd in the list of his Servants, and receive his Badge, and put on his Liverry, in order to their sharing in all the blessed Priviledges of his Domesticks. It was ordain'd in the Levitical Law, *That if any one had Children during his Service, they should be his Masters; for they were Born in his Family.* So all the Children of Christians may be said to be born in Christs Family, and to be a part of
 E 2 his

his peculiar Propriety ; which Propriety of his is own'd in their Infant Dedication : For Parents in that Solemnity, acknowledge our Blessed Redeemer to be the Rightful Lord and Master both of them and theirs, to the Rules and Orders of whose Family they bind both themselves and their Children to keep close : And he on the other side is Graciously pleas'd to testify his acceptance of theirs as well as them, by certain Solemn Rites, he hath appointed to be us'd by his Ministers.

5. Christian Parents do as it were enter a Protest against the fruit of their own Bowels, and Solemnly lay them under the Curse of God, if they live to cast off his Yoke, and lay aside his Fear, and revolt from his Covenant. I believe this is but rarely so much as the matter of an actual thought of a Parent upon such an occasion : But it is the language of the Solemnity it self. A Vow can't be made without a Penalty, either suppos'd or express : And all *Sacramental Vows*, in their own nature carry *Imprecations* in them. The *Baptismal Vow* made personally by any one hath this Imprecation imply'd in it, if not expressly intimated ; *The Lord do so to me and more also, if I perfidiously break it ; the Lord*

Lord shut me for ever out of the number of the Blessed, and verify all his Threatnings in my Exemplary Punishment, if *I* wickedly revolt from him: So also when Parents come to devote a little one of theirs to God in Baptism, such is the nature of their Transaction on its behalf, that they do as 'twere say, *The Lord renounce thee my Child, if ever thou livest to renounce this Vow I am entering thee under to be his; the Curse of God be upon thee if thou breakest his Bonds, and irreclaimably persistest in Rebellion against him.*

6. PARENTS Solemnly *Vow* and Promise to do all that in them lies, as their Children grow up, to make them sensible of their engagement and obligation to be the Lords; to whom they were so early Consecrated and Devoted. They oblige themselves, if they and their Children live, to Instruct them in the great Principles of Religion; to help them to understand what their Baptism obliges them to; and to engage them to live answerably to that Sacred *Vow* they then enter'd them under; and to bring them understandingly, seriously and personally to renew it themselves; that so its binding and obliging force may be the stronger upon them, and the entail

of Covenant Blessings, may be the more firmly secur'd to them.

THIS in short is Parents work in the Baptismal Consecration of their little Ones: Whence it appears, That they in that Solemnity, not only bring their Children under a Sacred Vow, but also come under one themselves.

YOU may take the Sum of their Vow in Form briefly thus:

“BEHOLD (*O Lord*) we who have
 “devoted our selves, and all that we
 “are and have to thee, do according to
 “thine injunction and expectation, particularly now Consecrate a little one
 “of ours, to thee from whom we have
 “receiv'd it. We own it to be more
 “thine than ours by Right; and we desire that thy Right may take place.
 “It was born in thy Family; we therefore bring it to be enroll'd in the List
 “of thy Servants; and to receive thy
 “Badge, and put on thy Livery, in order
 “to its sharing in all the Blessed Privileges of thy Domesticks. We have
 “handed it into a Miserable World;
 “and been instrumental to convey a
 “a corrupt nature to it; but thou alone
 “by giving it thy Grace canst make it
 “Happy. We present it to thee for thy
 “Blessing. We now enter it into thy
 Co.

“Covenant; the Blessings whereof thou
“hast in thy word been Graciously
“pleas’d to declare do descend from Be-
“lievers to their *Infant Seed*. We offer it
“to receive the outward Seal, and beg
“that thou wouldst convey and assure,
“the great things thereby betoken’d
“and intimated: We humbly lay hold
“of thy Covenant for our selves and this
“little one; on whose behalf we freely
“consent to all thy claims and demands:
“Hoping that if it shall please thee to
“to remove it out of this sinful and
“troublesome World, before it shall be-
“come capable of Transacting with
“thee Personally for it self, thou wilt
“take it to thy self, and make it happy
“in thy self; and firmly binding and
“engaging it if thou shalt please to
“spare its life, to live in thy Fear, and
“walk in thy Ways, and sincerely keep
“all thy Holy Commandments, as ever
“we desire or expect it should share in
“the Invaluable Blessings which thou
“hast promis’d to thy Servants. And
“if (which we humbly beseech thee
“Mercifully to prevent) it should live
“perfidiously to break thy Bonds, and
“wickedly to Revolt from thee, and
“persist so doing, without being re-
“claim’d, we can desire no other, than

"that it may be treated as an Insolent
 "contemner of thy Covenant,, and a
 "perfidious Revolter from it : To pre-
 "vent which nevertheless, we Solemnly
 "Promise, as in thine especial presence,
 "to do all that lies in our power ; by
 "Wholsome Instructions, and Serious
 "Admonitions, Parental Counsels, Sea-
 "sonable Reproofs, and Suitable Cor-
 "rections, as we can discern occasion :
 "Which endeavours of ours we hum-
 "bly and earnestly beseech thee to ac-
 "company with thy Heavenly Blessing ;
 "that they may be Effectual.

LET's now consider the concern of
 Children, in this Transaction of their
 Parents on their behalf ; of which you
 may take an Account in the following
 Particulars.

1. THEY are hereby bound to lead
 a life of Holy Devotedness to God the
 Father, Son, and Spirit. To this they
 henceforth stand bound, not only by
 that Divine Law that requires it of them,
 but also by their Parents Engagement
 and Stipulation ; which in matters of
 plain Duty to be sure is binding, what-
 ever it may be in things thar are indiffe-
 rent. We find *Samuel* under the Law,
 thought himself oblig'd by his Mothers
 Vow, and therefore gives himself free-
 ly

ly to serve the Lord in his Tabernacle, according to the dedication she had made of him: Yea, *Jephthah's* Daughter complies with her Fathers Vow, tho' (as most think) it was to be offer'd up in Sacrifice: *My Father* (saith she) *if thou hast open'd thy mouth to the Lord, do* Judg. 11. *to me according to that which hath proceed-* 36. *ed out of thy Mouth.* How much more then must those Children who were in Infancy enter'd into the Christian Covenant by their Parents, be oblig'd to stand to it, when it engages them to nothing but what was of it self antecedently their Duty. It's a part of the Honour Nature hath made due to Parents from their Children, that they own themselves bound by their engagements for them; and interest in this case falls in with Duty; the advantages of a compliance with their Parental Dedication being very great; and the mischiefs of a Refusal evident and notorious. Withal they are bound to conform to the Rules of that Family in which they were born, and to the Master whereof their Parents brought them to pay so early an Homage: And to continue in the service of that Lord whose Badge they so soon receiv'd; till they can find a better; and if they stay till then without

without all question they'll never quit him. The Obligation Infants by virtue of their Baptism come under to an Holy Devotedness, is of a mixt Nature: 'Tis partly *Natural* and partly *Positive*. 'Tis *Natural*, so far as it is an effect of the Parental power duly exercis'd: 'Tis *Positive* so far as there is any force in the Rites then us'd, which are of Divine Institution: and the case was in this respect the same as to Circumcision of old. St. Paul observes, *That every man that is Circumcis'd is a debtor to do the whole Law*: Circumcision oblig'd all that receiv'd it to a subjection to the whole Mosaick Law; and that altho' t'was administred to all of Jewish Extraction in their Infancy, and on their Parents Account, and at their desire; they were bound by it without staying for their consent: So also are all Baptiz'd Persons, tho' Infants, bound to a subjection to the whole Gospel. And the denial hereof by any so Baptiz'd, is a spitting in their Parents face; nay a pouring contempt on God's Sacred Institutions.

2. THEY are bound to own their Baptismal Obligation, as soon as capable. If they are bound to stand to it, there's certainly all the reason in the World they should own they do so. They are bound

Gal. 5. 3.

bound to own it in Duty to their Parents; who by giving them up to God, more effectully consulted their Happiness and Welfare than they could have done any other way : They are bound also to do it in Gratitude to God, for so Inestimable a Priviledge, as is so early an admission into his Family, and coming under his Covenant. It's necessary they should do it in order to the securing the entail of Covenant Blessings; to which their own personal taking upon them that Vow which they first came under in Baptism is necessary. For they are no longer to be consider'd as part of their Parents, than till they arrive at a Capacity of acting for themselves; at which time God expects both that they should own their Baptifmal Dedication to have been a signal Mercy, declare their readines to stand to the Vow they were then enter'd under, and personally make it for themselves, and in their own Names, as ever they expect to reap the Blessed Benefits that depend thereon. And tho' this Vow was really binding when it was *meerly Parental*, yet is it more firmly binding when it thus becomes *Personal*. And those must look upon the power of Parents over Children to be very small, that question whether

ther they may rightfully exert their Authority in bringing their Children under a Bond to do that when they come to Age, which is their unquestionable Duty then to do, whether there be such a Prior Engagement or not : But however we may hence observe another notion of the Baptismal Vow that is proper enough, *viz.* That it is that Vow which we by vertue of Infant Baptism are oblig'd to make explicitly when we come to Age ; in which case the Form drawn up in the foregoing Chapter is as fuitable, as 'tis with reference to those who are not Baptiz'd till they are Adult.

3. THOSE who stand not to their Infant Baptismal Obligation when they grow up; are liable to be treated as obstinate contemners of the Divine Favour; as Sacrilegious Alienators of what was peculiarly devoted; and as perjur'd Violators of Gods Covenant. Their case is not the same with that of the rest of the World, who remain Undedicated, and Unconsecrated to God : But as their Advantages would be great if they were Faithful, so will their Miseries be great if they are false to the Vow they came under in their Baptism. That very Bond that should have kept them close

to

to God, will consign them over to the more aggravated Woes, when put in suit against them. For tho' *Parents* were the main Agents, yet are they mainly concern'd and bound, and on them therefore will the Penalty annex'd take place.

4. THE Minister that Baptiz'd them, their Parents that Devoted them, and as many as were Spectators of their Infant Consecration; are so many Witnesses for God against them, if in their after Life they break Gods bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from them. They are Witnesses (I say) for God against them, and as such will be ready to appear at the last day. *Ministers* will then be ready to say, Lord here are such and such that we Baptiz'd in thy Name, and introduc'd into the visible Church, in the method which thou Institutedst, and thine Apostles practis'd: But before we did so, we thought we bound them fast unto thee; we exacted of their Parents, on their behalf, a Renunciation of the Flesh, the World, and the Devil, and a free consent to all thy claims and demands; that they were engag'd to this, we are Witnesses: If they have broken therefore the Vow they then came under, and persisted so doing, we
can

A Practical Discourse

can testify they are perfidious Traytors, and Faithless Rebels, and deserve the Severest Treatment. Pious *Parents* will also be ready to say; Behold O Lord we gave these Children of ours to thee, from whom we receiv'd them, in thy Service we Lifted them, and under thy Bonds we brought them with the Instituted Solemnity, even in their very Infancy: and we did all that in us lay to bring them under as strong and firm engagements as was possible; and often did we as they grew up, endeavour to make them sensible how much they were oblig'd to live to thee to whom they were Devoted; their Blood therefore be upon themselves: If they have wickedly and obstinately Revolted from thee, their Ruin will lye at their own doors, whereof we are Witnesses. All others also who *were present at the Solemnity* of their Baptism, will be ready to bear Witness, that they came early under Gods Gracious Covenant, and were enter'd in a Bond to be faithful in all the Duties of it; which if they have wickedly neglected, and liv'd to themselves instead of living to God, they can attest they have broken a Divine Vow that was upon them, which implies an highly aggravated Guilt. And Oh!
How

How sad a thing will it be, for Persons to have *Ministers, Parents, and Christian Friends*, Rising up in Judgment against them at last, for their Revolting from that God to whom they in their Infancy were Consecrated, and breaking those Bands that should have fastned them to him?

BUT after all, because there are some to be met with, that Question Parents power to bring their Children while Infants, under such an Obligation as that of the Baptismal Vow, and make their Incapacity Personally to consent a Grand Objection against this Practice. I shall now,

5thly. A little distinctly consider the Power of Parents to bring them, and the Childrens Capacity of being brought under such an Obligation as the Baptismal Vow.

1. AS for the *Parental Power*, its the greatest that Nature gives. The Interest of Parents in their Children is great; and such also must their Power over them needs consequently be. Children have no use of their Understandings to deliberate, or wills to choose; they have no Power to act: Nature invests Parents therefore with a right of Deliberating, Choosing, and Acting for them, during their own Incapacity.
Chil-

Children are the product even of their own Bowels, and therefore it may be well suppos'd they'll do their best for them: And they can never make their Parents a return for what they have receiv'd from them; can never pay them the Debt that is naturally owing them, and therefore may well be suppos'd ready to hearken to them, and comply with them in any thing that is reasonable. Nature puts Parents in the place of God to Children. During their Infant State, they have as great a power of Command over them, even as over their own Hands or Feet, or any other Members of their Body; where provided they keep within the limits and inclinations of Nature; *i. e.* Love and Cherish, and are tender of them, they can't overdo. All Civil Laws have allow'd great scope to the *Parental Power*, because its presum'd 'twould be us'd for their Childrens Good. In no Countreys hath it been so straitned by any particular Laws, as that Parents have not had a free liberty of disposing of their Children, and entring into Contracts for them, which shall be binding upon them, and of laying Charges and Commands on them, which shall be Obligatory: We have a known instance of this latter
sort

fort in the case of the *Rechabites*, who were char'd by *Jonadab* their Fore-father, *that none of them, their Wives, their Sons, or their Daughters, should Drink any Wine; that they should neither Build House, nor Sow Seed, nor Plant Vineyard, nor have any; but all their days dwell in Tents:* Which charge they punctually Obey'd: And there is a Solemn Blessing given them by God, for this their Obedience. And can it be suppos'd, Parents should have great Power over their Children, in Natural Matters, and Civil Affairs, and none in Religious Concerns? God takes care of the Infant Seed of Pious Parents, hath made great Promises, and extends his Covenant to them, and offers to entail the Blessings of it on them; And have Parents no Power to give up their Children to him, and enter them into his Covenant, and bind them to the Duties of it? Children are bound to stand to any Engagements their Parents come under for them, unless in any thing Sinful and of dangerous consequence? And can they safely reject the force of the Vow they bring them under in Baptism to be the Lords; and plead that it was a stretch of the Parental Power? Why if Parents have power to choose

Jer. 35. 6, 7.
vers. 19.

a Physician for their Bodies, an Instructor for their Minds, a Master for their Calling, &c. What should hinder their Power from extending to the choosing of God for the Portion of their Souls, and binding them to discharge the Duties owing to him? It may perhaps be pleaded, That Parents would not want Power in the case, were but their Children capable of such an obligation in their Infant State; but they are unmeet Subjects for the exercise of such a Power, and therefore it is Insignificant. Lets therefore,

2. A little consider Childrens Capacity of coming under such a Bond as the Baptismal Vow; *i. e.* their *Passive*, not their *Active* Capacity, which is not pretended or pleaded for: And here I desire it may be consider'd,

1. That they are capable of being bound in Civils: Why not in Spirituals? To Man: Why not to God? An Infant may have an Estate made over and secur'd to him by Law; he is capable of becoming a Tenant, and being oblig'd to pay a certain Rent and Homage when he comes to Age; and in the mean time of having Provisions from the Estate he hath a Title to: In such a case none will deny but a Parent or even

a Guardian may act for him, and that so as that he shall stand Engag'd: If so, Why is he not as capable of being oblig'd by a Sacred Vow, whereby his Parents would bind him to God, in order to the securing the Everlasting Inheritance, which He, by Gospel-grant, hath settled on all his Children. Let it therefore here be observ'd, That whatever is pleaded, in proof of the Incapacity of Infants, to come under a Vow to God in Baptism, by vertue of their Parents transacting on their behalf, proves them equally incapable of coming under any obligation whatsoever, till they are able to transact for themselves: Which is contrary to the sense of all the Wise and Prudent that have liv'd in all Ages of the World.

2. LET it be further observ'd, That Infants (even while such) are capable of sharing in the Blessings of Gods Covenant: And if so, Why not of coming under an Obligation to the Duties of it? They are capable of sharing in the Merits of Christs Blood, and the Influences of his Spirit, and other marks of Divine Favour; and of being treated by God as his Children; and that by their Parents means, whose Covenant Interest is Available for their Good in
 F 2 their

their Infant State : Why may they not then by their means also, come under an Engagement and Obligation to carry it as becomes the Members of Gods Family as soon as they become capable? But these things deserve a more accurate handling, than I can (at least at present) pretend to give them.

FOR a close of this Chapter, I shall Annex a brief Admonition both to Christian Parents that have brought their Children under the Baptifinal Vow in their Infant State : And to their Children, that so early came under an Obligation, to be the Lords, and to live to him, with reference to Duty consequent thereupon.

AS for you that have Devoted your Children to God in Baptism, remember (I beseech you) and take care to breed them up for him, to whom you have Consecrated them; expecting to be call'd to an account about your carriage towards them, and management of them another day. Take care to season their tender minds well : Instruct them diligently in the knowledge of God, and of their Duty to him ; and in the Nature and Import of that Divine Vow you brought them under : Shew them what will be the Benefits of keeping it, the danger of breaking it, and

and the Duties they are oblig'd to by it; and do what you can to bring them to take it upon themselves, and renew their Covenant with God in their own Persons, as soon as they are capable. Preserve them as much as may be from the Infections of an Evil Age: Set them Good Examples your selves, and get them among as many other lively Patterns of Serious Godliness as you can; That you may thereby provoke them to Imitation: Inure them to Holy Exercises from their Youth up: Possess them with as great a Reverence of the Holy Scriptures as you can: Narrowly watch their Tongues from the first that they begin to use them; and do what in you lies, betimes to learn them to govern their Appetites: Teach them the worth of Time; and spur them on to make a diligent Improvement of it: Encourage them when they do well; and Reprove and Correct them when they do amiss. Whatever Neglects or Miscarriages you over-look or pass by, be sure you allow them in nothing that is Sinful: This will be the way for you to have Peace and Comfort, whatever be the Consequences.

Remember how many ways you are oblig'd hereto; how solemnly you have

promis'd it; how certainly God expects it; and how severely he'll punish the neglect of it. How sad a thing will it be, to have the Blood of your Childrens Souls lying at your door on the account of your Carelessness in this matter, where your utmost Diligence was required? Should they hereafter prove Crosses and Heart-breaking Afflictions, thro' their Undutifulness; What a Sad Aggravation will it be of your Trouble, to think that all this hath arisen from your want of Care in their Education? How will they cry out upon you hereafter, if ever they come to be Sensible and Awaken'd, for your Unnatural Cruelty; who tho' you might be tender enough of them, and kind enough to them in other respects, yet minded not their Souls, took not any suitable care to Breed them up for him to whom you Devoted them? Nay, How will they in another World, if they finally persist in Wickedness, exclaim against you who were the Instruments of conveying their Being to them, as their Soul Murderers, and the first Occasions of their endless Ruin, by your neglect to take that care of them which you engag'd to when you Baptiz'd them? I beseech you therefore, if you have any regard
to

to God, any desire to see True Religion, Serious Piety and Godliness flourish; if you have any Love to the fruit of your own Bowels; and any regard to your own Peace now or hereafter; that you would make Conscience of this matter; Pay the Vow you made, when you Devoted your Children to God in Baptism.

AND as for you who thro' Gods great Goodness and your Parents Care, had the happy Priviledge of an Early Baptism: Oh be not so foolish as to cavil your selves out of the Benefit of it. Your Parents brought you under Vows to God; Oh desire not to be released. Had there been a considerable Temporal Estate of some Hundreds a year, settled on your Family before you were Born, upon some certain easie Conditions to be perform'd not only by your Parents, but by you after them; to the performance whereof, they should have oblig'd not only themselves, but you their Children: Would you not in such a case, where the Profit on the one hand, and Hazard on the other, is so sensible and apparent; own the binding force of their Obligation upon your selves in order to your keeping the Inheritance? And will you be more unjust to God, than you would to Man? Will you

own your Parents power to engage you for a Trifle, and not in order to an Everlasting Crown? But however if you think your Parents did you wrong, and that you are hardly dealt with, you may be out of Covenant when you will: But at the same time be it known to you, if you disown it, you forfeit the Benefits of it; if you renounce your Vow, you cast off God, and reject his Favour, and must never expect an Admission into the Kingdom of Heaven.

BUT if you have any concern for your Souls, any sense of the Wretchedness of your Natural State, and of the desirableness of the favour of God thro' a Christ, you cannot but prize your early Dedication to God, as an Invaluable Mercy: Oh Prize it, Improve it, Heartily Bless God for it; and stand to the Vow you then came under; and let it be the business of your Lives to Discharge and Pay it. Don't pretend its Hard and Strict: For there's nothing in it but what's Necessary: Ben't impatient of its Confinements, for they are all for your Good. Think often and Seriously of the Unsuitableness of your Carriage and Behaviour to the Vow that is upon you; and that with Sorrow and Lamentation: Think what
would

would become of you should God take your Forfeitures of the Blessings of his Covenant: And if you have any regard to God, any Love to your own Souls, any desire to be happy here or hereafter, lay aside all Excuses, and without delay, Freely and Solemnly own and acknowledge this Vow of God that is upon you, and set your selves with all your might to Live answerably to it.

CHAP VI.

Certain Useful Observations about the Consequence of KEEPING or BREAKING the Baptismal Vow: And of the RECOGNITION of it as Necessary to a Regular Admission to the Lords Table.

FROM the Baptismal Vow, I should now pass to the Consideration of the Solemn Stated Renewal of it at the Lords Table, whereto our Holy Religion straitly obliges us: But that some Intermediate Observations offer themselves, which may be of no small use, which I shall therefore first lay down: You may take them in the following order.

1. OB-

A Practical Discourse

1. OBSERVE that by the Serious Keeping and Adhering to the *Baptismal Vow*, all *Church Priviledges*, and *Special Covenant Blessings* are effectually secur'd. 'Twas before hinted, That in all Transactions by way of Covenant, as there are two parties at least suppos'd to be concern'd, so is there something suppos'd to be agreed to by each of these Parties. In all Covenants between God and Man, God engages to something on one side, and Man on the other; and a Faithful bent of Heart on Mans part, is pre-requir'd to Gods actual fulfilling his Engagements Gods part in all such Covenants lies in Promises, and Mans in Vows, which have the place of a Band between God and us: Let Man keep true to his Vows, and God will ever be sure to fulfil his Promises. In the Baptismal Covenant, God promises and ensures much, and we engage to much: But let us but take care to be true to our Vow, and we need not fear but he will most punctually stand to his Word and Engagement. Now the Promises Ratifi'd on Gods part in the Baptismal Contract are of two sorts; which I may call *Common* and *Special*: The *Former* relate to External Helps, Assistances, and Furtherances, as to Serious Piety and
God-

Godliness ; which tho' they are not actually Saving, may yet very much promote Salvation. The *Latter* relate to real Marks of Divine Favour, and Peculiar Love, to be communicated in order to Actual Salvation. The *Former* refer to things that are indeed vast Advantages in themselves ; tho' alas too often neglected and misimprov'd : The *Latter* to things vastly Higher, and which intimate a State incapable of missing of Final Happiness and Bliss. Under the *Former* are contain'd all *Church Privileges* accompanying a visible Relation to God : As an *Admission to the Lords Table*, there to receive Divine Nutriment in the company of his Children ; *the common operations of the Spirit*, in Holy Motions and Serious Convictions ; the *Pastoral Care* of those whom God hath set over them, and order'd to watch for their Souls ; *the hearty Prayers and Fraternal Admonitions of the Faithful*, with whom they are joy'n'd in Communion ; and the like. Under the *Latter* are comprehended, *Forgiveness of Sins* ; *Acceptance both of Persons and Services* ; *Sanctification* ; the constant *Guidance and Help of the Spirit*, effectually to further progress in the Divine Life ; together with all other *Blessings* suiting a State of *Adoption*.

THESE

THESE are the things whereto God in Baptism as 't were sets his Seal, upon the requisite Vows preceeding: And by our keeping this Vow, we (as I may say) secure to our selves the Actual Performance of the several Promises made and ratify'd. As to *Church Priviledges*, we by our standing and acting agreeably to our Baptismal Engagement, have an undoubted right to them, which none can warrantably call in Question: And whatever further is requir'd as necessary, in order to our enjoying them, is an Humane Invention. For Baptism being an Admission into the Visible Church, it follows, That none can warrantably deny any of the Priviledges thereof to any so admitted, unless it can be made appear, That they don't heartily stand to that Vow of God they then came under, by the open disagreeableness of their Lives thereto. And then as to those which are more peculiarly *Covenant Blessings*; as Pardon, and Peace, and the Sanctifying, Guiding, and Comforting Influences of the Spirit; these unless the whole tenour of the Covenant of Grace be directly 'thwarted, cannot be deny'd to those who faithfully keep this Vow: For it includes a Serious Repentance, and an hearty Faith; besides which the Gospel requires nothing

thing further, in order to Persons entering upon a Pardon'd and Justifi'd State, thro' the Merits of our Dear Redeemer; and then upon *Justification by Faith*, follows *Peace with God*. Further, Rom. 5. 1. They being *Born of Water and of the Spirit*, Joh. 3. 5. are become the *Temple of God*, and 1 Cor. 3. 16. have the *Spirit of God dwelling in them*: And where this Blessed Spirit dwells, nothing necessary to Salvation can possibly be wanting.

BUT 'tis observable, That there is this Remarkable difference in the case, between *Church Privileges*, and *Special Covenant Blessings*; That where the Baptismal Vow is not openly contradicted by the Life, and but Professedly adhered to, there is a right unto the former; by reason that it is not in the power of Man to judge of Hearts: But it must be Faithfully and Sincerely kept, and most heartily adher'd to, in order to the reaching of the latter, wherein 'tis with God immediately that we are concern'd, who is not by any Artifices of ours to be impos'd upon. Would you then at once effectually secure all the Benefits both of *Visible* and *Real* Christianity, do but sincerely adhere to the Vow of God you came under in Baptism, and act Correspondently, and the work is done.

2. OB-

2. OBSERVE, That by wilful and allow'd Breaches of this Vow of God, both *Church Priviledges, and Special Covenant Blessings* are directly forfeited: The Benefits of Covenant Keeping on the one hand are not greater, than are the mischiefs of Covenant Breaking on the other. *The breaking Gods Bands in sunder* and *casting away his Cords* (which is the common practice of Lawless Souls) is an actual forfeiture of the several Blessings that accompany either a *Visible* or *Real* Relation to God. For what signifies an Infant Dedication by Parents to the Most High God, tho' ever so Serious? What signifies the Vow they then came under, tho' ever so Solemn? To them who when they grow up, disown the Bond, Disclaim Subjection, and give themselves up to the Conduct of their own Hearts Lusts; Living *without God in the World*, forgetting their Dear Redeemers Love, and Rebelling against the Blessed Spirit of Grace, than which hardly any thing's more common? What, I say, can it avail to such Persons? How can they pretend to lay any claim to *Church Priviledges*, when advanc't in Years, who by their disorderly Lives openly renounce the Vow, on which their Admission to *Infant Church-membership*

Ship was founded? How can they have any share in the *Special Blessings* of the Covenant Promis'd on *Gods* part, who are so far from doing what was engag'd to on their part, that they do the quite contrary? Live to themselves instead of of living to *God*; follow the vain guise and fashion of this World, instead of obeying their Lord Redeemer; and walk after the flesh instead of following the Conduct and Yielding to the motions of the Divine Spirit? Persons whose case this is, shew that they belong to the *World*; out of which the *Church* is suppos'd to be gather'd: It can't therefore own them; for it must disclaim those whose Conversations savour wholly of this World. It plainly appears that such Persons are Children of Wrath, and not the Children of *God*, and therefore have nothing to do with those marks of Favour that belong to such. So that the interest in either the *Common* or *Special* Blessings of the Covenant is hereby forfeited. Altho' it must be own'd possible for a right to the former to remain, even when the latter are effectually lost. But to prevent Mistakes, I desire it may be here observ'd.

1. That tho' there is so vast a difference many times between the *Infant* and

Adult state of Persons Baptiz'd, That during their Infancy they were in a state of favour with God, on the account of their Believing Parents, as a part of whom they were then considered; and with the requisite Solemnity were admitted into *Gods* Visible Family here on Earth; and yet when they come to grow up, and stand on their own Legs, they are rejected, on the account of their Impenitence and Infidelity, and the Ungodliness of their Lives: Tho' there is (I say) many times as great a difference as this comes to, manifestly discernable in this case; yet is not *God* in the least chargeable with Changing, but 'tis we that Change and make the difference. *The*

Rom. 11
29.

Gifts and Calling of God (says the Apostle) *are without Repentance.* He Repented not of the kindness he engag'd to shew the *Israelites* for their Fathers sakes: 'Twas they who by breaking the Covenant in which they were bound to him, forc'd him to punish their Disobedience: So *God* Repents not of the kindness he in the Ordinance of Baptism engages to shew to the Children of Believing Parents, He is willing to make every thing good to a tittle, that he then engag'd to: But the Persons I am speaking of, who openly break with him,

him, and renounce his kindness in the face of the World, by living in the wilful violation of their Solemn Vow, make it inconsistent with his Honour to own them for his ; by their Rebellion against him, so long as they persist in it, they incapacitate him to deal with them as with faithful Subjects, which they are not. But it is more proper to say, That such Persons throw themselves out of Gods Family, than that they are thrown out of it. Observe further,

2. THAT tho' a willful and allow'd Breach of the Baptismal Vow, Liv'd in, doth directly forfeit the Blessings engag'd to on Gods part ; yet doth it not irrecoverably forfeit them. For be it known to all, so Gracious is God, that he is backward to take advantages against us. *He is not willing that any should* ^{2 Pet. 3. 9.} *perish, but that all should come to Repentance.*

How open and notorious soever have been our Breaches of our Baptismal Vow, there's still room for Repentance: Upon our serious Profession whereof, the door stands open in order to our Re-admission to all forfeited Church Privileges; and our Gracious God is ready again to receive and embrace us; our Abused Saviour to Interceed for us, and the Affronted Spirit to Assist and Help

G

us;

us; all the Blessings we have forfeited, may be Recover'd and Restor'd upon our Repentance and Reformation, our Renewing our Vow, and after keeping it sincerely. But yet a Forfeiture there certainly doth ensue upon willful and allow'd Breaches of it; both of *Church-Privileges*, and *Special Covenant Blessings*: Which all those would do well seriously to consider of, who have receiv'd the Christian Badge, call themselves Christians, and hope to be dealt withal as such, and yet lead Unchristian and Ungodly Lives.

3. IT may be observ'd, that the after Exercises of Religion, which build on Baptism as their Foundation, have this for their great design, to engage and help us to keep the Vow of God we then came under, or to restore us, and renew the force of it upon us, when we have broke it. It is the great design of *Catechization* to ground us well in the great Principles of our Faith, and Rules of Practice, that we may distinctly know what we are to Believe and Do. It is the great design of the *Preaching of the Word* (which the Spirit is wont to accompany with his Efficacy to those who seriously and faithfully attend upon it) to set those things (a Notional know-

knowledge whereof will be of no avail) home upon our Hearts ; to warn us of our Danger when running on in Sin ; to Rouz us from our Sloth, and Carnal Security ; to Re-call us from our Wandrings ; to Press us with the most Urgent Arguments and Motives to be heartily his, who alone can make us Happy ; and to live to him to whom we are Devoted ; and to Encourage, Further and Help us, in the way of Well-Doing, if our Hearts are truly set Heaven-ward. It is the great design of *Publick Prayers*, by our joint Entreaties in the Assemblies of Gods People, to Supplicate for Grace, and the Super-natural Aids of the Divine Spirit, to render our Tempers and Lives agreeable to our Christian Profession : And of our *Publick Praises*, by Celebrating the Divine Perfections of our Great Creator, Redeemer, and constant Benefactor, with one common Ardour, especially his Kindness, Grace and Goodness ; to engage our hearts to him, and stir up our selves for shame, to some suitable Returns of Holy Obedience. It is the great design of the *Lords Supper*, and its frequent Repetition, to keep our Hearts under the most lively sense that is possible of Redeeming Love, and to give

us an opportunity of Renewing our Baptifmal Vow with great Solemnity, over the Memorials of that Sacrifice that is of Everlaſting Vertue ; of which more in the Sequel. And it is the deſign of all *Church Cenfures* (wherever they are kept up agreeably to the end of their Inſtitution) to curb open Sin and Vice, to prevent Scandals and Blemiſhes to Religion, to recover Offenders, and to promote Sincere Piety and Holineſs ; to keep from Tranſgreſſing, and ſtimulate to the Obeying of the Laws of Chriſt, to which we have in our Chriſtian Vow all ſworn Subjection. All Chriſtian Ordinances, Duties, and Exerciſes, ſome how or other relate to this Vow ; and are deſign'd either to Inſtruct us in the Latitude Compaſs and Extent of it, or to ſtir us up to keep it, or to help us to perform it ; either to keep us from breaking it, or to convince us of our Breaches, and deter us from perſiſting ; either to help us to repeat it with a renew'd Ardour not having wickedly broke it ; or to help us to renew it after Repentance for having broken it ; to bind our Souls more and more cloſely to God by it ; and either to draw or drive us to act like thoſe that have a Sacred Vow of God upon us.

4. A Fourth Observation I have to make is this; That a *Recognition* of the Baptismal Vow is necessary in Persons admission to the Lords Table. Nothing can be more plain, Than that Baptiz'd Persons, as such, are not therefore to be admitted to the Lords Supper: For some renounce the Faith which they were Baptiz'd into; some that were Solemnly Devoted to *God* in Infancy, have no Fear of him before their Eyes, when they come to Maturity; and instead of spending their Lives in his Service, to which they were bound, they give themselves to commit all manner of Iniquity with greediness: Would to *God* there were not multitudes of such Persons among us! Others that yet are not by far so bad as the former, never think seriously of the Obligation which they were laid under by their Baptismal Consecration, never study how to answer it. It's as plain as the Sun, that such Persons are unfit for such an Ordinance as the Lords Supper; for they are incapable of reaching the ends of its Institution. Since therefore none but Baptiz'd Persons may approach the Lords Table, but all Baptiz'd Persons may not; the Question is, Where the discrimination of some from others of them, pro-

per to this case lies? And what it is that is necessary as a pre-requisite Qualification? I answer; the difference lies here, That some stand to their Baptismal Engagement, and others don't; and the qualification pre-requir'd, is an owning of it. For if Persons don't own the Vow they once came under, 'tis to no purpose to think of Repeating it again.

NOW the owning of this Vow is pre-requir'd to Persons Right Receiving of the Lords Supper, in a double respect: either with *Reference to God, or the Church.*

1. *WITH Reference to God*; and so the *Heart* owning the Obligation of this Vow is necessary; without which we cannot approve our selves to him, or so transact with him as to reap those Benefits which he designs for us by that Ordinance whereto we are suppos'd to pretend. Our Hearts must be *really* Consecrated, and our Lives Devoted to him, according to the tenour of our Engagement in Baptism, before we can justly pretend anew to strike Covenant with him who searcheth Hearts, and trieth Reins, as we are to do at his Table.

2. *OUR* owning our Baptismal Vow is also requisite *with reference to the Church,*

Church, to our admission to the Lords Table; We must make a *Credible Profession* of adhering to it; of which kind is every such Profession, as is not contradicted by an Unsuitable Life and Conversation. This *Credible Profession*, of an Adherence to the Baptismal Vow is necessary, that it may appear there is a difference between those that are admitted to Church Communion, and those that are debarr'd it: and for the same reason it would be well if it were *Publick*: It would be very becoming and Advantageous did Persons every where before they first Communicated, freely profess their Sincerity and Constancy in their Baptismal Covenant or Vow, and openly declare themselves in the face of a Christian Congregation, Enemies to the Devil, the World, and the Flesh: And this is the most considerable part of that which hath been wont to be call'd *Confirmation*: A thing much practic'd and insisted on in the *Primitive Church*, tho' of later times much neglected, and by some quite laid aside as useless; the more's the pity.

IT much Rejoyces me therefore (and I cann't forbear mentioning it on this Occasion) to know and hear of several, even of the Dissenting Congregations in

the Nation, wherein this Practice is still kept up : Among whom 'tis usual, for the Pastors after their private Transactions with those who are to be Admitted to the Lords Table, either on some day in the preceeding Week, or just before the Administration of the Holy Communion, Publickly to demand of them ; whether they don't stand to their Baptismal *Vow*, and take it on themselves ? Whether they don't cordially give up themselves to God the Father, Son, and Spirit, according to the tenour of it ? And whether they don't engage to walk agreeably to all the Laws of the Gospel ? Or to that purpose. Which is really a thing of great weight and moment ; and I could wish 'twere more universally minded. This (as I was saying) is the most considerable part of that which the Antients us'd to call *Confirmation*. And such a Declaration as this, made by Persons in the face of a Christian Congregation, is really an Act of *Confirmation* ; for they do thereby further ratify and establish the Contract which is between God and them ; and by confessing it to be valid and good, and openly owning that the *Vow* of God is upon them bind themselves still faster to him whose
they

they were before. Some may perhaps think this to be more ado then needs, by reason the very coming to the Lords Table with antecedent Preparation, and sitting down there among the Faithful, who are bound to God by Covenant, is a *Tacit* or *Virtual* owning of the Baptifmal Vow: And at moſt, they may apprehend that the doing this in private, before the Paſtor of the Church, might be ſufficient. To whom I can without any difficulty grant, that what I aim at, is indeed virtually imply'd in ſuch a caſe, and that the private performance of it may ſuffice to render Perſons worthy Communicants: But yet it follows not, but that the Publick Tranſacting of this matter may be much more Eligible. Many Inſtances may be produc'd, where very near as much depends on the manner of doing a thing, as on the thing it ſelf; and this I take to be one. For I pray obſerve; Perſons, upon their firſt coming to the Lords Table, paſs out of the ſtate of *Infant*, into that of *Adult* Members of the Church: The faſter therefore they are bound to G O D, the more likely will they be to credit Religion; of which the generalitiy of the World are apt to paſs a Judgment from the Demeanor and Converſations

sations of such Persons: Now the more publickly such a Profession is made, the more likely it is to influence them; since they will have so many as Witnesses against them, ready to admonish them upon occasion of their open Engagement; which can't but strike an awe. And, but that it would be too great a Digression, I could make it appear that the Scripture favours such a publick Recognition of the Baptismal Vow; and it is agreeable to the Practice of the Church in several Successive Ages. True it is, in process of time the *Romanists* in a shameful manner abus'd it; but that's no just Reason for our slighting or rejecting it, who may have it pure and free from their Abuses. However, this I think is plain and clear, That a *Recognition* of the Baptismal Vow, is necessary to Persons Regular Admission to the Lords Table. I add further,

5. THAT the more *Solemn* this *Recognition* of the Baptismal Vow is, 'tis so much the better; where I mean not *Ceremonious*, by *Solemn*; as if this matter would be ever the better, the more *Ceremonious* it was: No, that is far from my Intention: The *Papists* indeed have made it a Sacrament, and turn'd it all into Ceremony; for they use Oil in the
Admi-

Administring it, and Balsam, and sign with the Sign of the Cross, &c. But of these things we can safely say, *They were not from the beginning*; for the time when they first began to be us'd in the Church, can be mark'd out: But my meaning in the word *Solemn*, is this; that the more Seriously and Gravely it is manag'd, on the part of the Persons coming to Confirmation, and the more Authoritatively on the part of the Minister, as Christ's Officer, the more likely is it to Answer its End. The Establish'd Church of *England* hath taken care enough in this latter point, as to the Authoritativeness of this Transaction; but 'tis the Desire and Wish of all sober Observers, even among themselves, it were generally manag'd with more Gravity and Seriousness, that so it might be kept from degenerating into an empty Formality.

AND here it may be enquir'd, Whether or no it be fitting, requisite, or allowable, that Imposition of Hands, joyn'd with serious Prayers to God for the strengthening and confirming Grace of his Spirit, for those who come to own their Baptismal Vow openly in the face of a Christian Congregation; and an Authoritative Benediction on the part of

of the Minister, as God's Officer, should be us'd on this occasion? Whereto I answer, That there is a general *Unanimity* among those who have been most diligent in searching into Ecclesiastical Antiquity, in reporting this as the current Practice of the Primitive Church; and that not only while Miraculous Gifts continued, but afterwards: That it is Convenient, and warrantable by Scripture, as well as Antiquity, was the Opinion of our first Reformers here in *England*, and the most celebrated Divines we have had among us ever since. This was also the Judgment of the Learned *Grotius*, who was perhaps one of the Greatest Men these parts of the World ever produc'd: Nay, the same was the Sentiment of the famous *Calvin*; who founded *Confirmation* by Imposition of Hands, on *Heb. VI. 2.* where we find *Laying on of Hands* in the Rank of Fundamentals, in the fourth place; after *Repentance*, *Faith*, and *Baptism*; and before the *Resurrection* and *Eternal Judgment*. On which Passage of Scripture, *Calvin* hath this Note; *That this one Place sufficiently manifests, that the Ceremony of Laying on of Hands, on those who pass out of the Infant, into the Adult state of Believers, upon their open Professing the Christian Faith, had its Rise from*

from the Apostles: And therefore he declares, That tho' the Romanists had superstitiously abus'd it, yet he was altogether against laying it aside, but for keeping the Institution pure. The same was Beza's Judgment. Herein also Gerrard agrees, with divers of the most famous *Lutheran* Divines. And finally, That Eminent Servant of God, Mr. *Richard Baxter*, (than whom this Nation never afforded one more earnestly intent on the promoting Practical Godliness, or true Christian Discipline) hath wrote a Treatise on purpose for the Revival of this Antiquated Practice; which is Entituled, *Confirmation and Restauration, the necessary means of Reformation and Reconciliation*; whereto I refer those that would desire full Satisfaction in this matter.

HOWEVER, I shall take this Opportunity of warning All, to take heed of imagining that every thing is to be quite laid aside, that hath been abus'd to Superstition: That's a very fond Conceit; and some that have unwarily imbib'd it, little observ'd whither it would lead, if pursu'd with Rigour. Suppose a Man superstitiously abuses the Scripture, (which I am satisfied is no impossible thing) am I therefore obliged to lay it aside as useless? What an unhappy

py case were I in, if another Man's Superstition might rob me of that which would be so Useful to me! Any one almost in such a Case would be ready to say, What an Argument is anothers Abuse, against my right Use of that Invaluable Book, which God hath left as a Legacy to his Church? In like manner how weak an Argument is it, for Persons to say, The Papists have abus'd Confirmation; or they have abus'd Absolution to Superstition; therefore we must lay it quite aside? What, I pray, hinders us from using that rightly, which they have abus'd? We need not throw away the Wheat, that we may get rid of the Chaff; for the Fan will suffice to separate and scatter that, and leave the Wheat remaining.

CHAP. VII.

Of the LORDS SUPPER. That it is a Federal Ordinance, implying a Covenant-Transaction between God and us; and supposing a Renewal of Solem Vows to be the Lords.

HAVING sufficiently open'd the Christian Vow that we first come under in Baptism, and shewn what sense
of

of it is to be afterwards retain'd, and how it is to be recogniz'd; I now proceed to treat of the Renewal of it at the *Lord's Table*; whereby the Ends of our Baptismal Consecration are further answer'd, and the blessed Benefits thereof are more firmly secur'd to us. For be it known to all, That it is not enough to come under this Vow, either when Infants or Adult, and solemnly to own afterwards that we are under it, but we are often to renew it with great Solemnity over the sacred Memorials of our dearest Saviour, who gave his Life a Ransom for us, and Seal'd with his Blood that Covenant of Grace and Peace that is between God and us. Our Vow in Baptism doth indeed bind us fast to God, and our after owning its Obligation on us, doth tend to encrease its force: But yet God thinks fit to require and take new Security of us; and orders us to come to his Table, that we may there strengthen our Obligations; and not only own again and again that we are his by Right, but be enforc'd by the Awful and Affecting Considerations there presented to us, to New Resolutions and Engagements, and Solemn Vows, to lead a Life of Holy Devotedness: And in requiring this of us, He very much
con.

consults our Benefit. That I may handle this matter to the best Advantage, I will,

1. MAKE it appear that the Lords Supper is a Federal Ordinance, that it naturally implies a Covenant Transaction between God and us, and therefore supposes renewed Vows on our part: Vows (as hath been before observ'd) being ever an Essential Part of such Transactions.

2. SHEW that the more expressly the Christian Vow is Renew'd by us every time we come to the Lords Table, the more effectually and plentifully we are like to reap the Benefits of that Ordinance.

3. GIVE some Directions for the right Management of the Renewal of our Vows at such a time ; and endeavour to give some help as to the reducing this matter to Practice. The first of these Particulars is the Subject of this Chapter ; the other Two, of the next.

THE Lords Supper is in its own Nature a Federal Ordinance, which implies a Covenant Transaction between God and us, and supposes a Renewal of our Vows to be the Lords. This is that which I am now to make out ; to which Undertaking I am the more inclin'd, because I doubt there
are

are Multitudes that sit down, time after time, at the Lords Table, who don't sufficiently consider this matter : They look on that sacred Festival as an Ordinance instituted to keep up the Remembrance of Christ, and what he hath Done and Suffer'd for the Recovery of a lost World ; and therefore when they come to it, they endeavour to think affectionately of his Incarnation, Passion, and Crucifixion ; and thus far indeed 'tis well : But while they stop here, and go no further, they leave out a main thing ; which lies in that Covenant-Transaction between their *God* and *Saviour* and them, which is thereby design'd : Withal, there are many others, who indeed look on themselves as oblig'd to renew their Covenant, and repeat their Solemn Vows, every time they come to this Ordinance, who yet know not why they are obliged to it then, more than at another time ; know not on what to bottom this apprehension of theirs, which they have receiv'd from others, and taken for granted, without any Examination of its Grounds. I shall therefore from the following Considerations make it appear, That that of a Renewed Covenanting, is one Notion of this Ordinance, necessary to be taken

H

in

in by those who would rightly conceive of it; and that 'tis not without Cause that Persons are ordinarily press'd hereto.

1. FIRST therefore consider the Mutual Action in this Ordinance, of *Giving* and *Taking*, between God and us, and you'll see plain Evidence in the Nature of the Thing, of a Covenant-Transaction. *Giving* and *Taking* are the first obvious Actions in this Solemnity: *Giving* is God's part, and *Taking* ours. God gives us Bread and Wine by his deputed Officer; we receive them from the Minister, as from his Representative. Now pray consider a little, what 'tis that is given and taken at that time: 'Tis plain simple Bread and Wine, you'll say; and 'tis true, no more falls under the view of Sense: But what is it that is thereby signified? Is it not a bruised, nay, a broken Christ, giving his Soul an Offering for Sin, and shedding his Blood to make Atonement? 'Tis Christ with all his Benefits that there is given to the Believing Soul. As certainly as Bread and Wine is put into the Devout Communicant's Hands, so certainly is he invested in all Gospel-Privileges; so certainly hath he made over and convey'd to him, all Gospel-Benefits.

fits. God *Gives* Himself, his Son, his Spirit, his Grace, his Favour, and all that can be reasonably desir'd, or truly wanted, to the Believing Soul : This is on one side. On the other side, the Believer *Takes* ; Takes with his Hands the distributed Bread and Wine ; and receives with all his Heart what is thereby Figured and Represented. He receives an offer'd Christ in his Arms, and into his Heart ; in short, God actually makes over, makes a Delivery, as 'twere, of all that he promises in the Covenant of Grace; on his part : We by *Taking* then what he *Gives*, do naturally engage to all that in that Covenant he hath made our Duty : Which is the more evident from hence, in that a firm Disposition, and Bent of Heart, to the performance of all such Duty, is pre-requir'd to the actual Conveyance of those Benefits.

FURTHER, We may observe how Customary it hath been, and is amongst Men, by *Giving* and *Taking* of the smallest things, to Ratify Compacts of the greatest Consequence : A Man may among us give away all he hath by the Delivery of a Flaggon : Which Custom considered, may answer the Objection, which the appearing Meanness of the

H 2

things

things *Given* and *Taken* at the Lords Supper, compar'd with the great things thereby represented and made over, might give occasion to: The giving and taking but of Sixpence to strike up a Contract, doth lay as fast hold of a Man, as Ten Thousand Pounds in Hand: Much more then doth this Solemn *Giving* and *Taking* of Bread and Wine, which Christ hath made a part of his Religion, and whereby he is so closely represented, bind us as fast to him, as if we should repeat every word that he hath said, and profess our hearty Consent unto it.

OBSERVE further, under what Notion Christ is given at that Ordinance, to every truly hungering and thirsting Soul: Behold, says God there, to all such Persons, Here's a Christ for you, to be taken by you, as your Prophet, Priest, and King: Whereto the prepared Soul, naturally replies, Lord, I'm ready to take Him as thou offerest him to me: I'm for a whole Christ, in all the parts of his Saving Office: I'll take him for my Prophet, and credit him in all things; for my Priest, and in him I'll put all my trust; and for my King, to whom thy Grace inabling me, I'll yield a sincere persevering Obedience: Which is plainly

ly a renew'd Covenant, a short Summary of the Christian Vow.

2. CONSIDER also the Actions of *Eating* and *Drinking*, and you'll see further Evidence of a Covenant-Transaction. At the holy Supper we come to eat and drink with the blessed God. He is indeed invisible to us, but hath deputed one in each Christian Assembly to Represent Him, and in his Name and stead to Entertain those who come to him as his Guests. He spreads a Table, and provides us Food, that Eating and Drinking we may receive Nourishment for our Spiritual Life, and Supports for our Spiritual Warfare. Now Eating and Drinking, and Feasting together, we may observe in Scripture-History were the usual Appendages of Compacts or Covenants, as we may see *Gen. XXVI. 30.* and *Gen. XXXI. 44, 46.* where we find *Isaac* and *Abimelech*, *Jacob* and *Laban*, concluding their Compacts with a Feast; the like is evident in many other places: The Eating and Drinking together of those that were at variance, implies an antecedent Agreement; for it is a Token of Friendly Familiarity, not wont to be afforded to Enemies: *Abimelech* hated *Isaac*, and would not have eaten and drank with him, but upon

supposition they were agreed : Nor would *Laban* have done the like with *Jacob*, whom he pursued with a Design of Destruction, but upon the same supposition. It is an Axiom in the Civil Law, That if any one doth but drink to one against whom he hath an Accusation of Slander, or other Verbal Injury, he loses his Action, because he is supposed to be Reconcil'd to him. The Hebrew Word that signifies a Covenant, or any Fæderal Communion between Parties, is deriv'd from another word that signifies *to Eat*, because it was the constant Custom of the Hebrews, and other Oriental Nations, to Establish Covenants by *Eating* and *Drinking* together.

NOW by Nature there is a great variance between God and us, on the account of our Hereditary Apostacy : Sin as it sets us against God, so doth it set him against us. Where Sin therefore Reigns and bears sway, it's plain there's a great Unfitness for Eating and Drinking with God at his Table. That is a Solemnity that supposes a Persons Peace first to be made with God through Christ ; otherwise he's not likely to be a welcome Guest. But even where a Persons Peace is actually made, there are frequent

fr equent Falls, for which there must be a Renew'd Repentance; and God's admitting us from time to time to feast with him at his Table, notwithstanding our manifold Failings and Defects, is a sufficient Argument of his Readiness to pass them by, and anew to be Reconcil'd: Whenever therefore we come to eat and drink with him, we are to Renew our Self-Dedication. There's none, not even the best, but what between one *Sacrament* and another, do enough to forfeit all their Interest in the Divine Favour, were God severe to mark Iniquity. *Eating* and *Drinking* therefore with God, after such Renew'd Offences, supposes us anew to make our Peace with him, to devote our selves to him afresh, as ever we would keep his Favour; for which we at no time have such an Advantage as at his Table: Which will be further evident from,

3. A THIRD Consideration, which is taken from that which we feast upon at the Lord's Table; viz The Memorials of the great *Christian Sacrifice*. The most general and proper Notion of the Lords Supper, and to which all that relates to it may very aptly be referr'd, is this, *That it is a solemn Feast upon the Memorials of that Sacrifice of Infinite Ver-*

This is excellently Open'd and Explain'd by the Learned Dr. Cudworth

Gen. chap.
8. & 9.
Gen. 15.

Exod. 24.
5, 8.

tue, that was offer'd by our Saviour upon the Crofs for Sin: Which Notion is too large to be here distinctly handled; and therefore I shall meddle with no more of it than what concerns my present purpose. It is easie to observe how commonly Covenants between God and Man, were attended with *Sacrifices*: Thus it was in *Noah's* case; 'twas the same in *Abram's* case; so also *Sacrifices* accompanied the *Covenant* God enter'd into with the *Israelites* all in a Body; and by such *Sacrifices* offer'd, the *Covenants* made were confirm'd.

IT may be further observ'd, That *Sacrifices* were founded upon a *Covenant*. The *Covenant* God enter'd into with the *Jews*, requir'd them to offer up the several *Sacrifices* prescrib'd in the Law; which had they not been founded on a *Divine Covenant*, would have been no way likely to have been accepted. But suppose the *Covenant* once settled that requir'd them, and *Sacrifices* appear to have been *Federal Rites*, they were *Memorials* of the *Covenant* between God and the People; *Memorials to God*, putting him in mind of his Promises; and *Memorials to the People*, putting them in mind of, engaging and quickening them to their Duty. Each *Sacrifice* offer'd, implyd

imply'd a Covenant Transaction, between God and him that made the Oblation: Which points to the true meaning of that *passage*, which some have esteem'd so difficult. *Gather my saints together that have made a Covenant with me by sacrifice.* Psal. 50. 5
For Sacrifices were appointed to be signs and seals of the Covenant between God and his People. Whereto our Blessed Lord seems to allude, when at the Institution of the Supper, he says, *This Cup is the New Testament in my Blood*: Which is, *qu. d.* Covenants were of old Ratify'd by Sacrifices; the Blood of the Sinner being originally required by the Law; but the offering being of the Blood of another Creature: But I pour out my own Blood for you, and behold I now I give it to you. It is therefore a New Covenant, because not seal'd with the Blood of Victims, but my Own Blood. Which is also intimated by the Apostle, when he says, *Not by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his Own Blood, He enter'd into the Holy Place; and for this Cause he is the Mediatour of the New Testament.* Heb. 9. 12.

IT may be further observ'd, That as Sacrifices were heretofore Seals of the Covenant, so was eating of the Sacrifices a proper Appendix of most of their Oblations. They had four sorts of Sacrifices

ces in use among them. *Burnt Offerings, Sin Offerings, Trespass Offerings, and Peace Offerings.* *Burnt Offerings* were wholly offer'd up to God, and consum'd on the Altar ; neither Priests nor People having therein any part or portion. In *Sin Offerings* and *Trespass Offerings* God had a part consum'd on his Altar, and the Priests a part to eat of ; who eat of them as the Peoples Proxies, they being Mediators with God for them, who by bringing an Oblation for a Sin or Trespass, were suppos'd to be sensible of a Defilement. But of their *Peace Offerings*, as God had a part, and the Priests a part, so had they themselves also who brought them a part, of which they might eat, together with their Friends, Feasting and Rejoycing before the Lord. We have in the Old Testament divers instances of Persons feasting before the Lord, on these Sacrifices, that were call'd *Peace Offerings*. Thus we find Moses and Aaron, and all the Elders of Israel Offering Sacrifices, and Feasting upon them before God when they had done. So also at the general Covenant before mention'd, many Sacrifices being offer'd, we find

Elka-

Exod. 18.
12.

Exod. 24.

Elkanah making an yearly Journey to the Holy City, to Offer Sacrifices, and Feast upon them with his Family before the Lord; and many other passages are there of the same nature, which its needless to mention.

IT may be further observ'd, That the thus eating of Gods Sacrifices was a Fæderal Rite, between God and those that offer'd them. For God designing to have a peculiar Residence among the Jews, resolv'd to Live, as 'twere in Regal State among them. And therefore the Temple was his Palace; the Priests and Levites his Guard and Attendance; His House had its several Apartments for several Offices; and Furniture suited thereunto; on the Altar was his Fire, which was never to go out; and the Sacrifices offer'd were his Provision: Not that he could really *eat the Flesh of Bulls, and drink the Blood of Goats*; as he Psal. 50. 16. upbraids those who were apt to rest in Externals: But he by these things, and their Allusive Significations, serv'd sundry wise and great ends and purposes. Now Sacrifices then passing under the Notion of Gods Provision, it was a mark of great favour to be admitted to partake of them: And Sacrifices being seals of the Covenant, the Feasting upon the
Re

Remainders of them, was a further engagement to the Offerers of them, to stand to their part of the Covenant with God, of whom by their being admitted to feast with him, they had reason to hope they were accepted.

LET not any think all this a Digression; for besides that such Thoughts and Reflections as these may be of use, by helping us to understand these matters, without some light in which (and in others of the like nature) we must necessarily be in the dark, when we are reading the greatest part of the Old Testament; besides this I say, they are all to my present purpose, because of the resemblance these things carry in them, to those that I am now upon. For as Sacred Covenants were heretofore attended with Sacrifices, so the Covenant between God and us; that Covenant on which all our hopes are founded is attended with and confirm'd by the Sacrifice of our Saviour, which at his Table we Commemorate. As their Sacrifices were Fæderal Rites, and Signs and Seals of the Covenant between God and the People, so is our Solemn Commemoration of the Sacrifice once offer'd for us on the Cross, a Fæderal Rite; and this Sacred Institution a sign and seal of the

the Covenant between God and us, founded in the Blood of our Dearest Saviour: And as they were then to make a Covenant with God by Sacrifice ; so are we now to strike Covenant with him over the Memorials of our great Gospel Sacrifice. Further, as the Jewish Feasts were upon the Flesh of the Sacrifices they offer'd to God ; so is our Holy Supper a Feast, upon the Sacrifice which Christ once offer'd for us : And as their Feasts upon their Sacrifices were Fæderal Rites and Bands of Fæderal Communion between *God* and them ; so the Lords Supper which is also a Feast upon a Sacrifice, must needs be a Fæderal Feast between *God* and us, where by Eating and Drinking at his own Table, and partaking of his Meat, we are taken into a Sacred Covenant and Inviolable League of Friendship with him : As God by those Sacrifices and the Feasts upon them did Ratify his Covenant with those who did partake of them, in as much as they did in a manner Eat and Drink with him ; so doth he confirm his Covenant with us, by the Sacred Symbols at his Table, of which he allows us to partake : And as the People by Feasting on those Sacrifices with *God*, did Ratify and Confirm
the

the Covenant on their part; so do we by feasting on this sacrifice ratify & confirm the Covenant between God and us. Finally; as the Jews joyn'd themselves to God, by Feasting in his House, on his Sacrifices; so we joyn our selves to Christ, by Feasting in the place of his Worship, at his Table, upon the Memorials of his Body and Blood: And our Obligations to stick to him, follow and obey him, do as much exceed all other rites, in their Sacredness Strength and Vertue, as the Sacrifice of *Christ* excels that of a Beast, or the Eating and Drinking his Body and Blood, is beyond all participation of the meat of the antient Altars. There being therefore in the Lords Supper, so plain a Representation of a Sacrifice, which ever had a relation to a Covenant; and it being a feasting upon the Memorials of this Sacrifice, which feasting was ever a fæderal Rite, must needs be a fæderal Ordinance. Add hereto.

4. THE Consideration of the *Adjuration* which naturally seems to be imply'd in this Ordinance. Our Lord is at his Table Represented in our view as a Sacrifice for Sin, enduring the utmost Torments, Miseries and Dolours for our sakes; all which have a loud voice to us.
He

He seems as it were at his Table to adjure every one, by his Agonies and Conflicts, by his Blood and Wounds, by his Cross and Passion, by all that he underwent for their sakes, to Love him and be faithful to him; to hate and flye from Sin; and Renounce the Devil and all his works, lest they as much as in them lies, undo what he hath been doing, Crucify him afresh, and renew his Pain: Those therefore who after this, lay their hands on the Memorials of the Broken, Bleeding Body of *Christ*, do as it were call Heaven and Earth to witness, That they'll ever Live to Him who Dy'd for them, and rather Dye than renounce his Service. Now the very Heathens reckon'd that a Vow or Oath, made when Persons laid their hands on the warm Entrails of a Beast, (which was upon occasion customary with them) was the Solemnest Oath that could be made: How much more Solemn then, should we esteem Vows made, when we lay our hands on the Memorials of the Sacred Body of *Christ*?

5thly and *Lastly*, IT hath been the sense of all Christians down from the first Ages to the present day, That the Lords Supper is a Fæderal Ordinance; which

which is a consideration of no small weight in a matter of this Nature. Among many Evidences that might be given hereof, I shall mention but two. The Old Primitive Christians did so Sacredly and Solemnly bind themselves by Vows at the Lords Supper to their God and Saviour, that the Heathens were ready to suspect them of dangerous Plots and Conspiracies; from which charge while *Pliny* the younger, a Learned Heathen, doth candidly endeavour to acquit them, he at the same time gives us an account of some of the Vows they every time Renew'd at this Ordinance.

*C. Plin. E-
pist. Lib. 10.
Ep. 97.*

They Assemble themselves (says he in a Letter to *Trajan* the Emperour, still extant) *before day break, and sing an Hymn to Christ as if he were God; and then bind themselves with a Sacrament or Oath, not to do Mischief to any, that they will not Rob or Steal, or Commit Adultery, nor falsify their Words, nor deny their Trust; and the like; and then after they have eaten together* (says he) *they depart to their own homes.* But tho' his account is made up of Negatives, we may be well satisfied they added Positive Vows to them. My other Evidence is taken from the name of Sacrament, which they gave to this Ordinance joyntly with that of Baptism.

The

The word *Sacrament* is no where to be found in Scripture, but is plainly of Humane Original ; and it was us'd very early in the Church, to express and signify those two Ordinances of Baptism and the Lords Supper ; and in process of time 'twas also apply'd to other things. Now the word *Sacrament* properly signifies an Oath. It was originally the Military Oath, which the Soldiers took when they swore Fealty to their Emperours. When therefore we find this term of *Sacrament*, apply'd by Christians in the first Ages, to the Lords Supper, and us'd all along ever since whereby to express it, it implies that they have all been sensible that it was a Fæderal Ordinance ; since the word they have made use of for it intimates, that we in that Ordinance come under an *Oath* to Christ, much like the oath of Fealty which the Soldiers took to their Emperours : And indeed if we would acquit our selves rightly, we must every time we come to the Lords Table Vow and Engage, That we'll continue Christs Faithful Servants and Subjects, and Soldiers, and never do any thing against his Crown and Dignity as long as we live.

Lets then a little Reflect and make a pause : Lets think how strange

an instance 'tis of Condescension in the great Majesty of Heaven, That He should vouchsafe to hold any Federal Communion with such as we are : With us Sinners, who have so much Provok'd him, as to deserve to be utterly abandon'd by him : With us Sinners of the Gentiles, who were once without God and without Christ, and strangers to the Covenant of Promise : That God should suffer us to lay hold of his Covenant, That he should admit us to feast with him upon the signs and seals of it ; admit us to such an instance of Familiarity, and advance us to such an Honour, which is at the same time so much for our Benefit, Comfort and Security. Oh Bless the Lord and Magnify his Name : Exalt him highly and shew forth his Praise : Who disdains not to regard us, tho' Low and Mean, and Vile, and Despicable ; nay, who treats us poor Mortals, time after time, as if we were a sort of Angels, admitting us to Feast and to Rejoyce with him, in our Commemoration of his Love, and Renovation of his Covenant. Lets think withal, and that Seriously, of his great kindness to us in multiplying Tyes and Bonds upon us, that so he may the more effectually engage

gage us to himself. Our God is sensible of the slipperyness of our Hearts, and therefore he's for binding us as fast as may be. He hath so ordered matters, as that we are to be Consecrated and come under a Vow to him, as soon almost, as we begin to be; this Vow we are with great Solemnity to own and renew, as soon as we become capable of Transacting for our selves; and afterwards we are requir'd frequently to give new security of our Fidelity, over the Consecrated Elements at the Supper of our Lord: And the design of all is only this, the more effectually to engage us to that which is our unquestionable Duty, wherewith our interest is closely connected. In obliging us time after time, to renew our Bonds, God hath consulted our good, designing thereby to further our security of reaching those Inestimable Benefits which he hath design'd for us: We should therefore be so far from thinking much of them, that we should prize our Bonds; we should look upon our selves as so much the more Honour'd, by how much the more they are multiply'd upon us.

CHAP. VIII.

Of an EXPRESS RENEWAL of our Christian Vows, every time we come to the Holy Communion: And DIRECTIONS about the right Management of it.

IT now follows, that in the second place, I show how the Express Renewal of the Christian Vow, every time we come to the Supper of our Lord, will help us the more effectually to reap the Benefits of that Holy Ordinance: Which comes in very properly by way of Motive, to that which I doubt is too commonly neglected by many Christians; viz. Expressly Renew'd Covenanting at every Sacrament. What I have to propound under this Head, will (I say) properly come in by way of Motive: For if I can make it appear, That this is the way for our reaching the Benefits design'd for us by this Sacred Institution of our Religion; I think there are none, who are not their own enemies, but must readily fall in with it, and set themselves to put it in practice. It is indeed certain and undeniable,

deniable, That Persons growth in *Grace*, and Advancement in the Divine Life, may be promoted by their Devout Partaking of the Holy Supper; while yet either thro' Ignorance, or Forgetfulness, or Unskilfulness how to manage themselves at that *Sacred Solemnity*, they may neglect the Express Renewing their Vows to be the Lords: But if it be evident that this Ordinance would do them more good, and be attended with much greater Advantage to the same Persons, did they positively and expressly every time, make an act of surrender of themselves to him who gave himself for them; and anew engage to live to him who dy'd for them; it will follow that they must be enemies to themselves if they continue Negligent: Now this will be made appear from these three considerations; *viz.* That our slippery Hearts will be more fix'd and aw'd; our Faith and Hope be more confirm'd and strengthen'd; and our Comfort more encreas'd by this means, than could be otherwise supposable.

1. THE Express Renewing our Vows every time we come to the Lords Table will much fix and awe our slippery Hearts. None, that are not great great strangers at home, can be igno-

rant how apt our Hearts are to turn aside like a deceitful bow, and to lose the sense of those things which ought continually to influence and govern us, especially if remov'd from us by any distance of time; how easily the continually surrounding objects of sense, deface those Impressions which are at any time made on our minds by higher things; and how difficult 'tis to keep sensible from prevailing over Spiritual Engagements. Alas the Sensual Carnal part is so powerful in the best, and our Hearts are so apt to fall in with it, and the Temptations we meet with to draw off our Hearts from *God* are so numerous, and we so prone to yield unto them, that we can hardly tie our selves fast enough, or sufficiently multiply obligations on our selves to an Holy, a Christian, and a Divine Life. If the sense of often repeated engagements is apt to wear off (and who sees not that it too too often does so even in the best?) How unlikely is it that a single act of Consecrating our selves to our God and Saviour, or the same repeated only now and then, after large and considerable intervals, should retain a constant governing power over us? But the frequency and expressness of our Renew'd Vows,

Vows (if we take but care to apply our selves to them with any degree of that Seriousness that suits such a Solemnity) will much promote their influence upon us: For it will keep us under a standing sense of our Obligation; it will fortify us against Temptations; it will be a constant Fence, and Spur, and Monitor, to us. For if I have the least degree of Grace, and resolve not in the most daring and provoking manner possible to trifle with *God* and my own Conscience; Can I who month after month, while I am feasting on the Memorials of Redeeming Love, Renew my Self-Dedication to the Most High; can I (I say) presently forget that I am anothers and not my own? Can I for any one, so easily forget this, as if it were but once or twice in an whole Lives space that solemn Vows were made? And doth not their Expressness as well as their Frequency add to their force? For this implies not only a Recollection that we are the Lords, but a Serious Resolution taken up in his Presence, and form'd over the most awful Emblems of his *Greatness*, and *Majesty* and *Purity*; and the most Endearing Pledges of his *Goodness*, *Grace*, and *Love*; that we will be his for the future, more than ever

we were before. If we are Serious in such frequently Repeated Engagements, we cannot but be made more Watchful, more Considerate and Provident, more Diligent, and more Setled Christians, both in our Tempers and Lives, than we should otherwise be. Consciences work will be made more easie: For we shall have but a little way at any time to look back, to that which of any thing that can be thought of will be the most likely, to curb the fury of Lust, and abate the violence of Temptation, and quicken us to our Duty, and cause Repentance and Rising again after our Sins and Falls. Now this is one one of the Blessed Benefits design'd for us by the Institution of the Sacrament of the Supper; no other way more likely to be gain'd than by this Practice of Expresly Renewing the Christian Vow, every time we joyn therein.

2. THIS Practice will help to strengthen our *Faith* and *Hope*. There's no *Grace* that is more employ'd at the Sacrament, by Devout Communicants, than *Faith*. Its work is to view *Christ* thro' the Elements whereby he is Represented, to receive him when offer'd, and to return our all back to him again; tho' not by way of Requital, or out of
any

any hope of Desert, yet out of a sense of Duty, and as a Token of the highest Gratitude. A further Office of the same Grace, is, To behold the Fathers Mind and Heart, in that Amazing Mirror of his Love that there is set before us; and to behold the Divine Spirit in all his Sanctifying Gifts and Graces, pourd forth on all truly Covenanting Believers, as the Fruit of Christ's Purchase; and to yield up the Soul to be transformed into the same Image, by the same Spirit.

Now where hath *Faith* such an Advantage for this Work, as at the *Holy Communion*; and never is this Advantage so well improv'd there, as when our Vows are seriously and expressly Renew'd: For thereby do we shew that the Discoveries that are made by *Faith* at that Ordinance, do truly Affect us, and rightly Work upon us; thereby is our *Faith* approv'd of the right stamp; and thereby is it made a Governing Principle of our Tempers and Lives. Withal, 'tis observable how express God is at his Table, as to all the several Marks of his Favour and Love, which he makes over to us, and bestows on us. These are receiv'd by *Faith*; certainly therefore it becomes us to be as express in our Re-
turns

turns to him : And hereby will our *Faith* be strengthened, by reason of the Correspondence of our Carriage in this respect towards God, to his dealing vvith us ; and also by reason of that Riveted Sense of *Faith's* Transactions at this Ordinance, that vvill be hereby occasioned.

OUR *Hope* also will hereby be strengthened. Our *Hope* of the Acceptance of what we do ; and of Assistance in what we need : Our *Hope* of Grace here, and Glory hereafter. The more expresse (if serious) any one is, in giving himself up to God at his Table every time he comes there, the more Reason hath he to *hope* that God Accepts him, who never Rejects a *Self-Resigning Soul* ; the more Reason to *hope* for all the blessed Fruits of the Sacrifice and Death of Christ, to whom he consecrates himself ; the more Reason to *hope* for all needed *Guidance* and *Assistance*, from the blessed Spirit of Grace, under whose *Conduct* he freely puts himself ; the more reason to *hope* for all he can need either in this World, or another, since he so intirely commits himself to, and reposes his Trust in him, that is a suitable Portion. for him in either. Further,

3. WHICH

3. WHICH follows upon the former; This Practice will encrease our comfort, which it is one great Design of the Sacrament to promote. 'Tis indeed much to our comfort, to be treated at so Noble and costly a Feast, as God prepares for us, when he spreads his Table before us; 'tis comfortable to see what is there to be beheld, to Receive what is Offer'd, and to stand and take so delightful a Prospect, as we have there Opportunity for: But the serious express Renewal of our Vows to be the Lords, and Solemn Engagement to live like Persons devoted to him, is as great a Spring of spiritual Comfort, as any in all that Ordinance. For this, according to the Gospel-Constitution, lays a just Foundation for a Claim of all Gospel-Blessings, by vertue of the Promises made through the Blood we there Commemorate. The *Holy Communion* implies an Investiture in Pardon and Peace, Reconciliation, Adoption, and a Right to Eternal Life, to all truly Devout Participants; to all who heartily devote themselves to their Lord Redeemer: Renewed Vows therefore confirm our Title to all both present and future Blessings; and consequently lay a firm Foundation for the highest Comfort. For what can be
more

more comfortable, than for me, upon a Review of what past in that Ordinance, to find that I am Entitled to all those peculiar Marks of Divine Favour, which God in that Ordinance makes over to his Children; of which nothing can give greater Assurance, than our Repeated Devoting our Selves, with all the Seriousness and Solemnity we are able, to be his Servants and Subjects to our Lives End. All which things taken together, are methinks abundantly sufficient to recommend this Practice.

IT yet remains, That I give some Directions about this matter, and shew how we should manage the Renewal of our Vows to be the Lords, at the Return of every Sacrament. Which having been Excellently done already, by so many, I shall be but brief in it. However, these Eight following Directions I can dare to recommend to any serious Christians.

Direct. I. BEFORE you go to Renew your Vows to be the Lords, Recollect your past Breaches, especially those since your last Solemn Engagement. Look not on this as an indifferent or inconsiderable matter, but as a thing needful, in order to your Dedicating your selves anew to God, with any Advantage.
Take

Take a convenient Opportunity for Retiring from the World; and when alone, set your selves down seriously to consider what strong Tyes and Bonds you are already under, to be the Lords, and how little you Answer them. Review your Lives; rip up your Miscarriages; canvass all the Secrets of your Hearts; endeavour to know the worst: For since God knows all, 'tis every way best that you should do so too, that so what is amiss, may be rectified, and his deserved Displeasure averted. Consider your prevailing Temper, and stated Tenour, and recollect your Demeanor upon particular Occasions, when you may find Reason to conclude the Eye of God was most upon you. Think how you have carried it to the blessed God; how you have behav'd your selves towards your Redeemer; and what hath past between you and the holy Spirit. Think how you have manag'd your selves in Secret, in your Families; and in your several Relations; in your Callings and Business, and in your Retirements: How you have carry'd it towards your Selves, and to Others. Observe what Corruptions you have most indulg'd; what Temptations you have given way to; what Neglects you have fallen into;
and

and what positive Guilt you have contracted. When Time will allow it, the running as far back in our Lives, as our Memories will help us to do, will be very Proper and Useful: And this should be done with more than ordinary Carefulness, at Persons first Approach to the Lords Table: But when our Confinements are strait, the Recollecting what hath past since the last Sacrament, may suffice; in which the more strict we are, the better. Our Eyes should particularly be on our *Dalilabs*, whereby our Affections are most entangled; and it should be a particuly Subject of *Enquiry*, What Breaches of our last Vows they have drawn us into. In General; Let's lay our Rule before us, and compare our Selves and our Carriage with it, and that will soon discover our Defects. I need not tell a serious and considerate Person the Benefit of this Practice.

Directt. II. HUMBLE your selves seriously before God, for all past Breaches with *Him*, whether known or unknown, before you offer to come under New Vows to Him. The more pains we take, according to the foregoing Direction, in searching and viewing our selves, the more reason shall we find to
cry

cry out with the Psalmist, *Who can understand his Errors? Cleanse thou me from secret Faults:* For we have all some secret Faults that we overlook. Therefore I say be humbled for all past Breaches, known and unknown: Throw your selves at God's Feet, and own your Forfeitures of his Favour, and Desert of his Displeasure. Abase your selves out of a sense of your Vileness, that while you were engag'd and pretended to live to God, and your Redeemer, you should have liv'd so much to your selves, so much to this present World, and so much according to the Dictates of your Lusts: And be peculiarly humbled for any particular Failures, that may have had peculiarly aggravating Circumstances attending them. Think not of being Accepted upon the Making of New Vows, while you are Chargeable with manifest Breaches of your Old Ones, that are Unrepented of. This Humiliation and Self-Abasement, with Sorrow and Shame for past Breaches, is necessary by way of Preparation, in order to our Acceptable Consecrating our selves to God afresh.

Direct. III. Take heed of the *Extreams* of *Levity*, and over-great *Scrupulosity*, when you come to Renew your Vows
at

at the Lords Table. Take heed of *Levity*; as if it were a common, ordinary and customary thing, you were setting your selves about, when you went to give up your selves to God anew; this were the way to pull down a Curse upon your Heads, instead of a Blessing: Beware therefore of rushing upon such sacred Work, with a common and unhal-
lowed Heart; with an Heart full of the World; with a Heart prevailingly ad-
dicted to any Lust. And on the other hand also, Beware of too great *Scrupu-
losity*, in running matters too high; as if unindulg'd Infirmities, and the want of Assurance, were Bars to Acceptance; or as if Perfection was necessary to the obtaining the Blessings of a Devoted State. This were to pull thy self back-
ward, instead of advancing forward in the Divine Life. Levity in this case, is the effect either of habitual Profane-
ness (than which, nothing is more dread-
ful) or of great Negligence in Prepara-
tory Work, or of gross Ignorance of the Nature, Design, Import and Solemn-
ity, of Repeated, as well as Initial, Self-Dedication. Over-great Scrupulo-
sity in this case, is sometimes the effect of a very timorous Natural Temper, heightened by a Bodily Indisposition,
which

which makes Persons the Objects of Compassion : At other times it arises from a Mistake about the Method of God's Dealing with us under the New-Covenant-Dispensation ; from a Misunderstanding of the Terms of the Gospel ; and too hard, sour, and severe thoughts of the blessed God, unwarily imbib'd ; which Errors of theirs, if they value their own Peace or Welfare, are carefully to be corrected. Tho' the former is generally the much more dangerous Extream of the two ; yet is the latter very troublesome, by reason that it will fill the Soul with such Fears, as will exceedingly damp and discompose it, and unfit it for such Work as is the free, solemn, chearful Consecrating and Devoting it self to God. Both therefore are as much as in us lies, to be watch'd against.

Direct. IV. WHENEVER we go to Renew our Vows to God, we should carefully mind with whom we are to Transact ; who we are, that Transact with Him ; and for what purposes we do so.

1. WE should remember *with Whom* we Transact ; and to Whom our Vow is to be Renew'd ; and that is, to God the Father, Son, and Spirit : *God the Fa-*

K

ther,

ther, from whom we have Apostatiz'd, who yet is the Fountain of Blessedness, in whom only we can be Happy: *God the Son*, who is the only way to the Father, our Mediator, Priest, Patron, Advocate, and Helper: *The Holy Spirit*, who must be the Actual Conveyor and Introducer of all that Light, and Life, and Love, that shall capacitate us to enjoy the Father through the Son, either in this, or a better Life. 'Tis with the great God we in this Affair have to do; 'tis to Him whose Majesty, Glory, Power, Greariness, and Goodness, are Inconceivable and Inexplicable, that we are every time we come to the Communion anew to give up our selves: 'Tis with all that are called God, we in this Affair are to Transact. This one thought well impress'd upon us, would suffice to command the utmost Awe, Reverence, Seriousness and Devotion, whenever we set our selves to this matter.

2. WE should also remember *who we are*, that are to Renew Vows to be the Lords. Particularly we should remember, that we are Creatures laden with Guilt, which we can never expiate, and owing an Obedience that we can never fully pay: (1.) We should well remember that we are Creatures laden with guilt
which

which we can never expiate ; and therefore for whom God out of meer pity hath provided a Sacrifice, which at his Table he sets before us ; over the Memorials whereof, whenever we come to receive them, we are to devote our selves afresh to the Lord. We should therefore every time, as guilty condemned Criminals, promise Obedience for the future, with the deepest sense of our unworthiness of that Mercy, that must be our only Plea for our Selves, through the Merits of Another. (2.) We should also remember that we are Creatures, that owe an Obedience that we can never fully pay. That tho' we vow and vow never so often, we can't pay the least part of what we vow, unless as acted and influenc'd by him to whom our Vows are made : And that when we have done our best towards the paying our Vows, and answering our innumerable Obligations, there will be much wanting. And when we have done all we can, we are but unprofitable Servants ; God is not in reality a whit the better, for all the Service we can do him. The thought of this well impress'd, will keep us from pretending to any thing in our own strength ; it will lead us to a constant dependance on Superiour Aids ;

it will prompt us, whenever we renew our Vows, to fly to the Holy Spirit, for Assistance and Help, to answer and keep them; and 'twill prevent our Boasting, if any time by his Influence we have been kept in any measure sincere and faithful. Both these Considerations taken from our selves, will tend to make us deeply humble, out of a sense of our Vileness, Weakness, and Helplessness, whenever we go to give up our selves to God afresh.

3. WE should also remember for *what Ends* and Purposes we are every time we come to the Lords Table, anew to vow to be the Lords; and they in short are these two, the more firmly to secure to our selves his Favour, and the more effectually to bind and quicken our selves to our Duty. These are the Ends we ought to have in our Eye in this matter; and the serious Consideration of them, will help to make us in earnest, at the time of Renewing our Vows, and cause us often to think of them afterwards.

Directt. V. OF the whole Sacramental Solemnity, select that as the properest Instant, for thee to give thy self up to Christ, when thou art receiving him and all his Benefits into thy hands, as I
may

may say, and into thy heart. It may without all question be done acceptably enough at other Instants, during the Administration of this Ordinance: But the Reception of the *Elements* seems to be the most advantageous season. At every Sacrament therefore, when thou takest the Bread and Wine, as sensible Representations of Christ and his Benefits; as visible Pledges of the Love of God through Christ to thy Soul; do thou give up thy self afresh to God thro' Christ, to live continually in his Love and Fear, and in strict Obedience to his Laws, till thou shalt be taken to Glory. When the Minister, as Christs Messenger, puts the Consecrated *Elements* into thy hands, then do thou after a thankful Adoration of the Divine Clemency and Bounty, expressing it self by such inexpressible Gifts as are thereby represented; then, I say, do thou, from the bottom of thy Heart, cry out, I willingly accept of thine offer'd Covenant, O Lord; my Soul doth gladly take thee for my God and Father, for my Saviour and my Sanctifier: And here I give up my self to thee, as thy Own, thy Subject and thy Child, to be sanctified and saved by thee; to be beloved by thee; and to be happy in loving thee to all Eternity.

O seal up this *Covenant* by thy Spirit, which thou sealest to me in thy Sacrament, that without Reserve, I may be entirely and for ever thine.

Direct. VI. EVERY time thou at the Sacrament Renewest thy Vows to be the Lords, take care particularly to vow the Death of that Corruption that sticks closest to thee; whereby God is most dishonoured, and thy Comfort and Welfare most endangered: Give it up freely to be sacrificed for him, who gave himself a Sacrifice for thee. Thy Darling Corruption is thy nearest, thy closest, and one of thy most dangerous Enemies; Vow therefore to maintain a constant *Combat* against it; that tho' thou canst have little hope of quite eradicating it, yet Divine Grace assisting thee, thou wilt not yield and give way to it, thou wilt not be over-power'd by it. Take care expressly to vow an opposition to that which by its prevalence would make all thy Vows ineffectual,

Direct. VII. THOU shouldst at every Sacrament, not only vow to be the Lords in general, but to be his in all *Conditions*. Give up thy self time after time, to be disposed of by him, in all respects, as he shall see good. Take this particularly into thy Vows at the
Lords

Lords Table, That thou wilt Acquiesce in all the Disposals of Providence, and be contented in every state whereinto God sees it fit to bring thee. Disclaim being the Carver of thy own Lot. By thy Renew'd *Vows* willingly resign all that belongs to thee to Divine Management and Conduct, and resolve that thou wilt cleave to God, whatever it cost thee; that tho' he slay thee, yet thou wilt trust in him; that thou wilt follow him when he frowns, as well as when he smiles; that thou wilt bear his Rebukes as the *Chastisements of a Father*, design'd for thy good; that thou wilt look on every thing as best, whatever he allots thee; in a word, that thou wilt intirely resolve thy will into his. The doing this at every Sacrament seriously, would prevent us a great deal of Trouble; it would be a Spring of Peace and Comfort to us, whatever were our Condition, whatever should befall us.

Direct. VIII. TAKE care that the deepest *Thankfulness* be a constant Concomitant of all thy Renewed *Vows*; No greater occasion for Thankfulness than this; That we have any ground at all for hope of being accepted, upon our Devoting our selves to God thro' Christ; Tho past *Vows* have been broken, we may be

again accepted upon Renewing them ; That we have Hearts and Inclinations to Renew them ; that we have any ground to hope for strength from Heaven, to enable us to keep them when we have Renew'd them ; that we have so advantageous a Season for Renewing them, as the Sacrament brings with it ; all minister cause of Thankfulness. Let's therefore with an holy Exultation of Soul, with that Cheerfulness and Joy that are the Natural Indications of a Thankful Heart, give up our selves to God from time to time ; that it may appear we don't look upon it as a piece of Slavery or Drudgery, but as our greatest Happiness.

THESE few Directions well follow'd, would make Sacraments otherguess things than they ordinarily are, and would help us to a much more sensible encrease of Grace and strength by them, than we are wont to receive.

CHAP. IX.

*Of the Nature, Sacredness, and Strength
of the Obligation that lies on all those
to lead an HOLY LIFE, who
often repeat Sacramental Vows.*

NOTHING's more obvious to be observ'd, Than that Persons may in many cases be several ways oblig'd to the same thing. Those who are under no Sacramental Vows at all, do yet stand bound to the same thing, to which they oblige those that are under them: viz. To Love and Serve the Lord all their days, with all their Heart, and with all their Might; to Live continually in his Fear; and Walk in all Holy Obedience to his Laws: All Rational Creatures, as such, are plainly oblig'd hereto, without any such Vows Antecedent as those before explain'd, or with part of them only. Suppose Persons therefore to remain Unbaptiz'd (which yet methinks none that are come to the use of their Reason, who have any value for their Souls, should be content to remain) and so not to have come under the Christian Vow at all with any of the pre-

prescrib'd Solemnities ; or suppose them to have taken the Christian Vow initially upon them in Infant Baptism, without a Solemn Recognition of it when at Age ; and without ever coming to the Lords Table to Renew and Repeat it ; (which is the much to be lamented case of many who pass for Christians in the days we live in) notwithstanding the defects in either case, the Persons concern'd are yet highly oblig'd to be the Lords, and to live to him : Withal Vows made on a Sick Bed, or in any hour of Distress and Danger, give a Superadded enforcement to the same Obligation : But there is a peculiar Sacredness and Strength, and binding force in those Vows that are manag'd in the Order before describ'd ; and which particularly are frequently repeated at the Lords Table. For,

I. THE Obligation Persons are hereby laid under, hath all the marks of Freedom and Voluntariness ; which is to be understood of their Confirming, and Renewed, and not of their Initial Vows : Persons hereby freely oblige themselves to that whereto God had before oblig'd them. They own the validity of the Obligation they were under to God, antecedently to any consent or act

act of theirs, by owning the Justice, Equity and Reasonableness of his Claims, and consenting to yield to them: And so that which both was and is the matter of their Duty, appears to be the matter of their Choice; for of their own accord, they bind themselves to a Faithful Performance. Now this is a great Additional Obligation, because it is a *Self Obligation*. I am bound to be the Lords, before I Vow it, and whether I Vow it or not; but if I Vow it I am doubly bound: For God hath bound me, and I bind my self: And the oftner I Vow it, the more firmly do I bind my self; and the greater appearance is there of a Plenary full Consent. So that I have not only the Authority of God, but the authority of my own Resolved Mind, to awe me to a faithful discharge of my Duty: And tho' a Command of Gods is a sufficient Obligation, yet doth my own engagement give a Super-added force thereto; by reason of the power God hath given us over our selves: So that by *Vowing* we will be the Lords, and his only, and his for Ever, which is our own free voluntary act, we utterly renounce all indifference in the matter, and quite put it out of our power (as I may say) ever to refuse any instance

stance of Duty and Obedience, without an open contradicting our selves, as well as going contrary to our God. Now if our own free Promises, Oaths, and Engagements have not an Obliging and a Binding force upon us, we may bid adieu to all Civil Society and Religion at once. How can it be suppos'd we should mind or be govern'd by any Obligations we are laid under by another, be he never so much above us; if we are not Influenc'd by those Obligations under which we voluntarily lay our selves? If anothers Authority can firmly bind us, certainly our own free Engagements may strongly oblige us: If God may bind us to what he pleases by his Command; certainly we bind our selves firmly by our own voluntary Vows.

THIS Consideration doth indeed as well suit those *Vows* that are made on a Sick-Bed, or in an hour of Distress, as those that are first form'd and renew'd at a Sacrament: (and it would be well if any Persons who have such *Vows* lying on them unperform'd, would duly weigh it) But yet the Repetition of Sacramental *Vows*, by those who stately frequent the Holy Communion, gives it a peculiar force in our case. I add,

2. THAT

2. THAT Persons don't hastily and on a sudden rush on, and are not e'er they are aware drawn into the Obligation they are by these Sacramental *Vows* laid under, but there is abundant time and scope for, and all the marks of Deliberation, which much adds to its force. There is in this case no Circumvention or Surprize ; no force or craft is us'd, to draw persons to oblige themselves to that, of which they should have any occasion to repent, upon the withdrawalment of the Inducement ; which in any case much weakens an Obligation : But Persons proceed deliberately in binding themselves to be the Lords. 'Tis true when they are first consecrated to God in their Infant State, there is no room, no Capacity for Deliberation : But in all after acts, in their Recognition of the Christian *Vow* at years of Maturity, and all its renewals and repetitions, tho' there is a vast difference in the degree of deliberation us'd by several Persons, yet is there a sufficient degree of it, to give it a strong binding force, ever necessarily presuppos'd

THOU wert not its true, capable of deliberating on the matter, when thou wert first bound to be the Lords in thy Swadling Cloaths : But hadst thou not
abun-

abundant time and scope for serious deliberation after thou grewst up? Nay, Did not thy after desiring to come to the Lords Table, imply that thou hadst seriously consider'd the matter, and wert come to a full determination to stand to thy Baptismal *Vow*, and live answerably to it? For why else shouldst thou desire to be admitted to the Communion, there to renew thy Engagement, and repeat thy *Vow*? Nay, Didst thou not at least pretend to him by whom thou wert admitted to the Lords Table, that thou hadst fully deliberated on the matter, and wert come to a fixed settled Resolution, to stand to the engagement thou cam'st under in Baptism? Wer't thou not told that this was absolutely necessary in order to thy admission to, right acquitting thy self in, and reaping any benefit by that Ordinance? Wer't thou not therefore seriously call'd on, sedately and soberly to weigh matters in thy Retirement, as thou wouldst not by thy Prophaneness and egregious Trifling with God in his most Sacred Institutions, pull down ruin on thine own Head? Wer't thou not warn'd rather to keep away, and forbear proceeding any further, in Polluting Holy Things, if it were not thy formed purpose, (Di-
vine

vine Grace enabling thee) to lead a Christian Life, under a Christian Name and Profession?

Was not an owning of thy Baptismal Vow, whereby thou first wer't bound to thy Lord Redeemer, and an express Promise to keep and live up to it, exacted of thee and given by thee, before thou wer't admitted a guest at the Lords Table, there to feast on the Memorials of his Love? And what O Man, O Woman! Could'st thou do this without deliberation? Without thinking what thou didst, what thou wer't about, and what all these things meant? If thou didst not use all the Deliberation which thou ought'st to have done in a matter of so great a Consequence and Importance, 'tis thy own fault, thou can'st blame none but thy self: But it appears, thou thought'st thou hadst deliberated long enough for a just determination, by thy proceeding and coming to joyn with Devout Communicants at the Lords Table, after such Warnings, Admonitions, and Intimations: Thou must certainly have had some thoughts about the matter, otherwise thou would'st have had no reason at all to have prefer'd coming to the Sacrament, before staying away from it: Why didst thou not
then

then, I pray, throw off thy Masters Livery once for all, if thou thought'st his Service a slavery? Why didst thou not lay aside the Christian Name, if thou didst not seriously intend a Christian Life? Why didst thou go to make new Vows, unless thou resolv'dst to live answerably to them? Why dost thou now continue to heap Bonds upon Bonds, and *Vows* upon *Vows*, if thou art really unwilling of that to which thou Engagest thy self? I pray observe it. There's a great deal of Deliberateness in thine Engagements to lead an Holy and a Pious Life: There was so at first, when thou Professedst thine adherence to the Baptismal Covenant; and there is so at every Sacrament, where thy Covenant is suppos'd to be renew'd. By thy very coming time after time to the Communion, thou professest thy self not to be weary of thy Master, nor his Service; not to be ashamed either of his work or his wages; but that thou art Resolv'd whatever befalls thee, thou wilt adhere to him, and faithfully follow him: And is there not plainly all the marks of Deliberateness in an act that is thus persisted in for a course of years together, and often Repeated? But what signifies all this,
if

if thou Vowest, and Breakest; Engag-
est and Falsifiest thy Word, as soon as
thou hast done? What signifies its De-
liberateness, were it an hundred times
as great as 'tis, if thou art not to be
prevail'd on to keep thy Vow? But how-
ever; what I aim at is plain; any Pro-
mise or Engagement of weight and mo-
ment, by how much the more delibe-
rate it is, so much the more Binding and
Obliging is it: Deliberation being a
guard against our being deceiv'd or im-
pos'd on; against our being surpriz'd
or ensnar'd: And a security that we
are well satisfi'd in what we do: That
our grounds are firm and our way safe;
Now no Promise or Engagement that
can be mention'd is more deliberate,
than is the Vow which those who fre-
quent the Holy Communion are often
Repeating: None therefore can be
more binding and obliging than that.
I add further,

3. THAT no actions can have grea-
ter *Solemnities* attending them than those
Vows have, we often come under to
be the Lords; and to Live to him. Al-
tho' there hath been very great variati-
on discernable in the Solemn Rites that
have attended Federal Transactions,
according to the different Inclinations

of several People and Nations ; yet have they all agreed in their design and tendency ; which is to encrease their awfulness, and bind the parties concern'd the more effectually to the performance of what they engage to ; waving other instances that might be produc'd ; let's a little consider the Solemnity that attends our Christian Covenanting. In *Baptism* Parents give up their Children to God as his : God by his Ministers, who are his Representatives, accepts them : He orders them to pour *Water* on them, in token of his readiness to pour on them his Grace and Favour. The poor Infants are washt, to betoken their need of Divine Grace to purge away their Defilements ; and this *Water* is also the Representative of *Blood* ; the *Blood of Atonement* : Which Blood will be upon them in order to their Acceptance, if when they come to years, they live to him to whom they were Devoted ; but 'twill be upon them to their confusion, if they revolt and rebel ; lead dissolute, carnal, wicked and ungodly Lives. In the *Lords Supper*, the visible Memorials of a Crucifi'd Christ, a Christ Crucify'd for Sin, are set before all the Communicants, and distributed amongst them. There is a Beholding,
and

and a Receiving, and a Feasting, and an admission to the utmost Familiarity and nearest Communion, which our embody'd Spirits are at present capable of, with our Glorifi'd and Exalted Saviour. And what can awe us, if not the sight of the Blood of our Dearest Saviour, which was shed to Expiate Sin? But we not only see it, but we drink it; intimating our firm Resolution to Revenge it on our Sins, which were the cause of its Effusion. We swear over our Lords Body and Blood, that we will be true to him; as ever we hope for any Interest in his Death and Sufferings, we engage to be subject to him; we Vow with his Blood in our hands, with his Blood in our mouths, that we will be true to him to the death, who shed his Blood for us; and that we will be the death of those Sins and Lusts, by indulging which we should Crucify him afresh. Withal we do this not under a covert, or in a corner, but openly, before Men and Angels; we do it in the face of the Church, which much adds to its Solemnity; by reason that so many Spectators as are present at our Vows and Engagements; so many Witnesses should we have of our horrid Perfidiousness, should we falsify and break them.

The very Solemnity of these our Vows and Engagements, adds to their awe, and encreases their Sacredness and Force. And then further,

4. *Direful Imprecations* attend and accompany our Repeated Vows; which much adds to their awfulness; *Direful Imprecations* (I say) if we should not be faithful and true to our Engagements. When we from time to time Solemnly Profess our selves to be Christs Disciples at his Holy Supper; and promise to live in Obedience to the Laws he hath given us, and the Pattern he hath set us, in hope of the Blessings he hath purchas'd for us, and is at his Table ready to make over to us; we call for all the Curses of God upon our Heads, if we don't take care to pay our Vows. It was a Custom in old times, which we find often mention'd and hinted at in Holy Writ, To hew a Beast in pieces, and divide the pieces into 2 parts, and then walk between them; the Language whereof was this: That the Parties concern'd wisht they might have the like treatment, if they were not Faithful and True. So while we, at the Communion are striking Covenant with God, over the mangled and broken Body of our Dearest Lord, we wish as
'twere

'twere for the like treatment, if we are not faithful in Service, and true to his Honour and Interest. The Natural Language of such a Rite, according to the Jewish manner of Imprecating at the time of their making Compacts, is this, *God do so to us and more also, if we forget, or perfidiously break our Vows.*

When we take the Blood of our Lord into our Hands, we do as 'twere wish it may be upon our Heads, if we live not to him who dy'd for us: This is the natural language of Actions, tho' it ben't express'd in words. The chief Priests and Seribes, that were the Murderers of our Saviour, cry'd out, *His Blood be upon us*, when *Pilate*, convinc'd of his Innocency, would have Released him, and all succeeding Ages have cry'd out against them for their horrid Impiety and Audaciousness: But they and their Progeny have felt the fruit of that Curse they brought on themselves, with a witness, to this day; And so will they also sooner or later do, who from time to time joyn in a Sacred Action, that hath such an imprecation attending it, or imply'd in it; to which by their wilful and allow'd Breaches of their *Vows*, they openly expose themselves over and over. Withal the Communi-

cants at a Sacrament do all profess to believe the whole Gospel, and to submit themselves to it: Now the Threatnings of Christ are a part of his Gospel, which therefore they choose to fall under if they don't obey his Commands. if they lead Ungodly and Unchristian Lives, they consign themselves over to Eternal Death and bind themselves to endure the Torments of Hell Fire. What besotted Creatures then must they be, who live in the wilful and allow'd Breach of many and often repeated Vows to be the Lords, and to live like Devoted ones, as securely as if all were well? Whose case is the subject of the Chapter next ensuing.

From these four considerations taken conjunctly, which so fully lay upon the Sacredness and Strength of our Christian Vows; viz. Their *Voluntariness*, *Deliberateness*, *Solemnity*, and *Attending Imprecations*, I might, I think, warrantably draw this Conclusion: That no Ties can bind those fast to God; no Bonds can be strong enough for such Persons, as can evade the force of such Vows as these. But this will more properly come to be consider'd in another place.

CHAP. X.

Of the dreadful case which all those are in, who heap Vows upon Vows, without any serious sense of their force, and without any real hearty endeavours to answer and pay them.

MANY there are (alas too too many!) who were Solemnly Dedicated to God by Baptism in their Infancy; who own'd the Obligation of their Baptismal Vow, when they came to Age, and afterwards went to renew it at the Lords Table, where they have again and again repeated it, engaging to Live Soberly Righteously and Godlily, in imitation of their Redeemers Example, under his strict Discipline, agreeable to his Laws, and under the conduct of his Spirit, and so are bound by many and strong Sacred Tyes; and yet all this while they have no serious suitable sense of their Force. They heap Vows upon Vows to be the Lords; without ever heartily and in earnest endeavouring to answer and pay them; nay the stated course and tenour of their Lives is opposite and contrary to them, So far

are they from the Psalmists temper and practice, who seriously and solemnly looking up to God, Heartily owns that his *Vows* are upon him, that they wilfully break all Bonds, and snap the strongest ties asunder, that they may have scope for their Lusts, and without controul live as they list. The Unhappiness of such Persons case deserves to be consider'd.

Jam. I. 23.
24.

THE Apostle speaks of some that are *Hearers of the Word and not Doers*; whom he *likens to Men beholding their natural face in a glass*; who behold themselves, and go their way, and straitway forget what manner of men they were. They'll give the word of God (whereby both their Tempers and Lives ought to be Regulated) the Hearing, but never mind it afterwards. I doubt such Hearers are very numerous amongst us at this day; otherwise we should certainly see otherguess effects of so many Serious Awakening and Useful Sermons as are time after time deliver'd in the Publick Assemblies. And I as little doubt that there are many, who go Sacrament after Sacrament reaking in their Lusts, to renew their Engagements to be the Lords, over the Sacred Emblems of his Body and Blood, and then and there make

make fair Promises, of denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, of living as becomes the Gospel, and leading mortify'd, holy, heavenly Lives; who go their way, and are no sooner come into the World again, but they presently forget what they have seen, and what they have done, and what sort of Bonds they are under; what manner of Persons they ought to be, and what they have engag'd they would be.

I would willingly give such Persons, who upon serious Reflection, and searching their own Consciences, find themselves herein too justly chargeable, matter for their sober thoughts to work upon; that so, if it be possible they may be awaken'd out of their secure and dangerous Estate.

I know very well, that there are some in the World, who while their thoughts and Opinions of others run very low, have so high Conceit of themselves, and those of their own way, as to take all for real Saints that are in Communion with them; And therefore they continually speak of them, and to them, and in all respects deal with them, as if they were wholly such, and free from all mixtures; on which account, they can't bear being dealt with on the Supposition

tion which I now take for my Foundation : All that I shall say, is, I wish their Actions would shew them to be, such as they take it for granted that they are. But when all's done, let Persons pretend to what Purity they will above their Neighbours, and let there be never such care taken, while the Church is on Earth, there will be Tares among the Wheat ; the Gold will have a mixture of Dross ; there will be some of the Devil's Servants wearing Christ's Livery ; there will be some that make so splendid a Profession, that none can justly debar them from Eating and Drinking in our Lord's Presence, and at his Table ; whom yet He at the last Day will publicly disown, and cause to depart from him, as Workers of Iniquity, and wilful Violaters of the Vows they came under to him, as appears from *Luke XIII. 26, 27*. But tho' such Persons may and often do creep into the purest Communion, without any ground at all for a Charge of Negligence on the part of those to whose Inspection God hath subjected these matters ; (by reason 'tis not in their power to know Mens Hearts) and tho' they may continue Church-Members, and in reputation too, for Piety, through their deceitful Wiles and Arti-

Artifices, while they keep their Vices out of the reach of Publick Observation; yet so long as they live in wilful and allow'd Breaches of their Christian, their Sacramental Vows, and persist in violating the sacred Engagements they time after time Renew at the Lords Table, their Case is inconceivably dreadful: Which must needs appear, if the Aggravated *Guilt* which they contract, and the Proportionable *Danger* they incur, be but duly Considered: Both which I'll a little open and unfold.

1. LET us consider the Aggravated *Guilt* which those Persons contract, who are under many Vows to God, but mind them not; who professedly give up themselves to their Saviour, Month after Month, at his Table, and engage to live like his Disciples and Followers, but falsifie their Professions, and break their Engagements, by the Carelessness, Irregularities, Wickedness, and allow'd Disorders of their Lives. The following Particulars will give a sufficient view of such Persons *Guilt*.

1. THEY stand chargeable with the utmost height of *Profaneness*: 'Tis an abominable thing to see to how high a contempt of all that's Sacred, some that are the profest Enemies of Religion, arrive;

arrive ; but in reality, 'tis not comparable to that of those who pretend to be its Votaries and great Admirers, who yet live oppositely to the Rules and Laws of it. All *Profaneness* is very provoking to the blessed God, by reason of the unworthy and dishonourable Reflections it casts upon him ; but none so much as that which is cover'd with glazing Hypocrisie : Which being the case here, carries the *Profaneness* of the Person concern'd, to the highest pitch. For,

1. Heaven and Earth, God, Angels and Men, are often call'd to witness to that Transaction, which is of it self of the greatest importance, but is by such Persons hartlessly manag'd, and little minded : They pretend frequently to come in the Fervours of Devotion to Commemorate their Dying Lord ; to recollect their Obligations to him, and feast on the Tokens of his never-to-be-forgotten Love ; to own themselves Redeem'd by him, from Misery and Ruine ; and to give up themselves to him as his purchas'd ones : They pretend through him to strike Covenant with their offended God and Father that is in Heaven, having the Memorials of that Sacrifice that alone hath Vertue to procure them
Accep-

Acceptance, in their View, in their Hands, and in their Mouths. They pretend to lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and their Faces in the Dust, humbling themselves for past Offences; Renouncing, for the future, all, even their most beloved Lusts; and Vowing and Swearing in the nearest presence of the Majesty of Heaven, to which they are capable of being admitted, a dutiful Affection, faithful Obedience, and holy Devotedness: And the more to Awe themselves, they call in all above them, and round about them, to bear witness to this their Act and Deed, whereby they solemnly bind themselves to all that their holy Religion obliges them to: And all this is done but from the Teeth outwards (as I may say) and very superficially; their God and Saviour have not their Hearts, but their Lusts bear sway; they remain the same Men they were; and by their Lives shew that all this was meer Trifling; they never in reality cordially meant, what they with such a Train of Solemnities bound themselves to; and are as careless about the Performance, as if none were privy to their Engagements: And this not in a single Instance, but a stated Course. What Profaneness can be greater! On such Persons

Persons the most sacred things, its plain, can strike no Awe! For they in reality Ridicule, what in the nature of the thing calls for the greatest Seriousness; and that even whilst in appearance they are as much in earnest, as they are capable of being in any thing. If the Sin of *Nadab* and *Abihu* was great, who offered strange Fire at the Altar of God, how great must their Guilt then be, who thus profane the holiest of Gods Institutions!

2. THE highest Contempt is hereby pour'd on the Pretious Blood of Christ, which is pretendedly highly priz'd and valu'd. Those who are Communicants at the Lords Table, profess a mighty value for that pretious Blood of his, whereby we are Redeem'd. They, even by their Appearance there, profess themselves under a full Conviction, that that was the *Blood whereby they were purchased*, that that is the *Blood whereby they must be justify'd*; that that is the Blood that must *purge their Consciences*, and *cleanse them from all Sin*; in a word, That that Blood is the only thing that can plead with God, and procure from Him any Mercy for them. By their frequent solemn partaking of the Memorial of it in the Sacramental Cup, they pretend to be sensible that nothing's so dear

Act. 20. 28

Rom. 5. 9.

Heb. 9. 14.

1 John 1. 7

dear to them, nothing's so much esteem'd by them ; and therefore they magnifie its Vertue, and extol its Worth ; on that they pretend to place their whole Dependance ; and on the Covenant thereby seal'd to ground all their hopes : The partaking of the vertue of it, is that of which they profess themselves most earnestly desirous ; in the contemplating the blessed effects thereof they pretend to take the most ravishing delight ; and the effusion of it, they swear to revenge upon their Lusts, which were the occasions of it. This is the Language of the Celebration of the Ordinance of the Supper ; this in part is the common purport of his Discourse, Profession, and Petitions, who is the Administrator ; wherein all that are present seem to fall in ; and it also is the distinct Language of the several Communicants : And all this while the Persons I am pointing at, count this Sacred *Blood an unholy thing*, Heb. 10.29 they do in reality (whatever they may pretend) no more value it, ascribe no more vertue to it, see no more excellency in it, than in common Blood ; they in their Hearts slight and neglect it, as a mean, trivial, insignificant, worthless thing ; and this plainly appears by the Affronts they in the course of their
Lives

Lives put on him, whose Blood it is; by their allowance of themselves in those Sins, from which it was design'd to redeem them; by their wilful Breaches of those Vows, the keeping whereof is the the only way to secure them an Interest in it; and their careless forfeiting the blessed Benefits of it, without any considerable Remorse and Concern. Now by their frequent trifling with the Blood of so sacred a Person as our Dear Redeemer, in swearing over it to him that shed it, (and that on their Account) that they will be his, and his alone; and depend on the vertue of his Atonement, in the way he hath prescrib'd; to which *Vow* and *Profession*, their After-Life too plainly gives the Lie; hereby they pour the highest Contempt upon it, and so are guilty of the most egregious and daring *Profaneness*. But

2. Such Persons are also chargeable with the basest *Perfidiousness*: for they profess the strictest Amity with the blessed God, while yet they cherish *Enmity* against him, and carry it in an hostile manner towards him. Feasting with any one, was ever esteem'd a Token of Friendship; and to cover *Enmity* under the Symbol of *Amity*, was ever esteem'd basely Perfidious, and nothing is wont to be

be more heinously resented. Now the Communicants, time after time, at the sacred Supper, feast before God ; nay, they feast with him at his own Table ; and thereby profess themselves to have laid aside all *Enmity* against him, who shews himself so ready to be Reconcil'd to them : And as the blessed God by the Pledges of his Love which he gives at his Table, firmly assures of his Favour, so doth the Communicant by receiving these *Pledges*, solemnly engage a Return of Duty : And yet in the mean time there's an hostile Heart, cover'd over with a Friendly Vail, which abundantly appears in the After-Life. 'Twas reckon'd a great Aggravation of *Achitophel's* Crime, by *David*, that when he pretended to be his familiar Friend, and ate of his Bread, he yet lifted up his Heel against him. Psal. 41. 9. Joh. 13. 18. The same was reckon'd a great Aggravation of *Judas* his Crime by our Saviour ; and the same is also a great Aggravation of these Persons Guilt : They pretend, by their frequent feasting with God, to be at Peace with him, and Renew their *Engagements* to banish all things offensive to him from their Tempers and Lives, as far as they are able, every time they come to his Table : But their Backs are no sooner turn'd, but they can-

ry on Hostility against him afresh, as if he were their open Enemy : Than which, nothing can be more horridly base.

3. NO Crimes carry in them greater *Audaciousness* than those of these Persons; which highly aggravates them : For,

1. THEY in the most wretched manner that is conceivable, attempt to impose on the blessed God. Every Sin indeed, of whatever kind it be, doth imply an Attempt to impose upon the Heart-searching God; a deep and riveted sense of whose Omniscience, Universal Inspection, and Omnipresence, would be sufficient at any time to deter from it, how great soever were the Temptation to it. But none are chargeable therewith in so egregious a manner, as these Persons; who think to put him off with a mock Consecration of themselves to him, which hath nothing of reality at the bottom of it; who think to put him off with that which would not satisfy the meanest and weakest of their fellow Creatures; *viz.* often-repeated Promises without Performance; and fancy they shall please him by mocking him in the most contemptuous manner; and imagine they may undo all past faults by a new Vow, which yet they take no
more

more care to keep, than they did those which went before it: And think to obtrude themselves upon him for his Servants, by vertue of their frequent Promises of Fidelity to him, in order to the receiving of his Wages, while yet they spend their Lives in doing the Devil's Work. This is a sort of *Audaciousness*, that is much aggravated, and very provoking.

2. They virtually bid him defiance, and call upon him to do his worst, for that they fear him not. They would not dare, I suppose, to express any thing like this in words; but their Actions speak it. For when they, Month after Month, call God to witness, that 'tis the firm Resolution of their Souls to be his, and to live to him; and then go their way, and still persist living to themselves and to their Lusts, they do interpretatively tell him, that they value not his Threatnings any more than they do their own Promises, and that they are not afraid of the utmost severity he can use towards them; which certainly is as great *Audaciousness* as Mortals can be guilty of; and no small Aggravation of their Sin. Further,

4. NO *Ingratitude* is comparable to that of these Persons. For,

M 2

1. THEY

1. THEY crucify their Saviour afresh, and that every time they come to commemorate him at his Table: *They crucifie him afresh, and put him to open shame*; they murder the Lord of Life as'twere anew, and make his Wounds bleed afresh. And is this a suitable Return for such Love as his was? Can any thing be more ungrateful? Was it not enough, O ye harden'd Wretches, that our dear Lord should once so far condescend, as to come down from Heaven, suffer, bleed, and die, in order to your Salvation? Must he be always suffering from you, who once suffered for you? Did he not suffer enough from Friends and from Enemies, from the chief Priests the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Souldiers, and the common People, when he was here on Earth; that you cannot let him rest now he is in Heaven, but must be renewing his Sufferings by profaning his Institutions, and doing what in you lies to make all his Sufferings ineffectual, by your persisting in those Sins, to save you from which he dy'd; and to leave and forsake which, he engages you, every time you appear before him at his Table? Is this all the Return you'll make him for his unspeakable Kindness to you? Can all he hath done and suffer'd
for

for you, no more influence you, than this comes to? No such *Ingratitude* can possibly be instanc'd in, as this bespeaks.

2. **THEY** contemptuously undervalue that Covenant that was the effect of Infinite Wisdom, Amazing Pity, Strange Goodness, and Rich Grace; the Blessings whereof were purchas'd at a vast Expence, which also shews their monstrous *Ingratitude*: This Covenant they undervalue; for they wilfully neglect performing the Conditions, on which the Benefits promised in it are to be bestow'd, and by which perform'd, they may be secur'd; and that altho' they time after time vow and promise a Performance of them; by their Negligence and Carelessness, wherein they shew that they value not the Covenant, nor the Inestimable Blessings of it in reality a rush; and so return Contempt for all the Love, Pity, Pain, Cost and Charge of their God and Saviour in order to the putting them into a capacity of Salvation, which was a Blessing fallen Angels never enjoy'd; this is horridly ungrateful, and therefore very provoking. Great therefore certainly must their Guilt be, who are chargeable with such horrid *Profaneness*, such base *Perfidious-*
M 3 *ness,*

ness, such tremendous *Audaciousness*, and detestable *Ingratitude*.

TO all which, I shall add one Consideration more, which possibly may affect some, much more than any abstracted Arguings: Which is this, That the Sin of the Persons before describ'd, is greater than that of *Peter*, who deny'd Christ, and in some respects greater even than that of *Judas* who betray'd Christ, or of the *Jews* that crucify'd him: And if so, certainly it must be horridly enormous.

1. THEIR Sin is greater than that of *Peter* who deny'd Christ. For *Peter's* Sin was in a particular Act; the Sin of these Persons in a stated Course. *Peter* was acted by the Power of a Temptation which accosted him on a sudden; these Persons cannot make any such pretence for a partial Excuse. *Peter's* Sin, tho' great, was yet such as was consistent with Sincerity, which can by no means be said of the Sin of those, who run a round of making and breaking Sacramental Vows, whereby they plainly shew they have no fear of God before their Eyes, no true love to their Saviour in their Hearts. *Peter* had no sooner sinn'd, but he went out and wept bitterly: These Persons
persist

persist in their Impiety, and are as impenetrable as a Rock.

2. THEIR Sin is in some respects greater even than the Sin of *Judas*, who betray'd Christ. I doubt not but *Judas* thought that our Lord (who had so many ways shewn his Power in his view) would escape, altho' he should deliver him into his Enemies hands: But 'tis meer riveted Malignity against Christ, by which these Persons are acted; which won't admit even of any such weak Plea as that, even for a partial Excuse. *Judas* his Sin, tho' unspeakably heinous, was yet a single Fact: But the Sin of these Persons is repeated over and over. *Judas* his Perfidiousness was great in betraying his Master: But I know not whether their Perfidiousness be not to the full as great, if not greater, who time after time vow Fidelity to him with all possible Solemnity, and yet break their Vow immediately, and continue so doing. *Judas* endeavoured to undo what he had done, when he came to bethink himself: These Persons may undo what they have done, so far as a thing once done, is capable of being undone, viz. by serious Repentnce; but refuse, and persist. *Judas* consider'd of his guilt, till it over match'd him; which inti-

mated some sorrow for what he had done : These Persons go on without any sorrow at all, as if all were well, and there were nothing amiss.

3. THEIR guilt is in some respect greater than that of the *Jews* who crucify'd Christ, for they persecuted Christ in his state of Humiliation : These Persons Affront, Despise, and Abuse him, and after a sort Crucify him, even in his estate of Exaltation. They, when they Crucify'd him, knew not what they did ; but these persons knew that 'twas Sin that brought Christ from Heaven to Earth ; Sin that occasion'd all his sorrow ; Sin that nail'd him to the Cross ; and bury'd him in his Grave ; and that was ever hated by him as the worst of all his Enemies, and yet they will persist in it in defiance of him, notwithstanding their frequent Vows against it. They did what they did against Christ out of zeal for their Law, to which they lookt on him as an Enemy : These Persons can pretend nothing but Love to their Lusts. They were instigated by others : These Persons can lay the blame on none but themselves : They break their Vows and they will do so, because whatever they pretend, they can't bear to have Christ to
Reign

Reign over them. These things seriously weigh'd, must needs make the guilt of wilful allow'd breakers of Repeated Sacramental Vows, appear to be very great and enormous. But further;

2. LET's also consider the *Danger* which such persons incur, which is proportion'd to their guilt. Their *Danger* must needs be great : For,

1. THE course they take hath a natural tendency to Harden their Hearts, and Sear their Consciences, and make them impenetrable by any thing that might do them good. That Persons Heart that is not loitned by the blood of Christ often View'd, Commemorated, and Drunk at the Sacrament, must needs grow more obstinate and unmalieable. Christ will depart from that Soul that can by nothing be fastned to him ; God will withdraw his Grace, where no Ties are strong enough to hold : And if Christ depart, and the Spirit forsake, What can follow but Coldness, Hardness, and Stupidity !

2. THEY are the Devils sure Prey, and have no guard against his utmost Malice. They fall to the Devils share on course who deal thus triflingly with God, and thus contemn and abuse their Saviour. If our
Vows.

Vows won't hold us fast to our Redeemer, our Lusts will hold us fast to the Devil; and every Sacrament we come to, he'll get greater power over us; and be still gaining a fuller and fuller possession of us.

1 Cor. 11.
29.

3. EVERY time such Persons come to the Lords Table, *They eat and drink damnation, or judgment, to themselves.* i.e. (as is plain by the Apostles discourse there) they expose themselves to a variety of Temporal Judgments, by their egregious trifling with the Blessed God, and profaning so Sacred an Institution: They are in danger of feeling the bitter fruits of this their horrid Sin, either in their Mind, or Body or Estate. *For this cause* (saith the Apostle) *many are sick and weakly among you, and many Sleep.* Those that persist in breaking their Vows, and yet come time after time to the Lords Table, may e'er they are aware pull down Judgments on themselves. And I don't much doubt, but the Sickness, Weakness, Melancholy, Losses in the World, Crosses in Friends, Disappointments in Designs, and unhappy Disasters which give so much trouble, nay the untimely ends, that some Persons come to, are the effects of this their Sin.

4. THEIR

4. THEIR danger must needs be great, for that they have the Abused Blood of Christ crying to Heaven for vengeance on them. And if they are miserable who have not the Blood of Christ to plead for them, how dreadful must their case needs be, who have the Blood of Christ pleading against them; which to be sure is their case, who so much abuse, despise, and profane it, and pour such contempt upon it.

5thly and Lastly, THESE Persons lay themselves open to the heaviest condemnation in another Wold. Their own Sacramental Vows and Engagements will rise up in Judgment against them, and sink them the deeper in Everlasting Misery. The utmost threatnings of God are directly Levell'd against such; and will without Repentance in a little time overtake them to their utter Ruin. In the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, we find the Apostle twice arguing strongly with a comparative, *If*, which may also be aptly used in this case. *If* (saith he) *the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiv'd a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? And if he that despis'd Moses's Law, dy'd without Mercy under 2 or 3 witnesses, of how much* *Heb. 2, 2, 3, Heb. 10, 28, 29.*

much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath troden under foot the Son of God, &c. In like manner may we strongly argue by way of Comparison in our case: Thus; If they were severely punish'd who broke the *Mosaic* Covenant, of how much sorer punishment will they be worthy that wilfully violate the Covenant of the Everlasting Gospel? If they were formerly severely punish'd who broke a *Legal Vow*, about a Ceremonial Rite; What punishment may not they expect who break their Repeated *Vows*, about things of infinitely greater Importance? If Covenant Breakers amongst Men are to be severely punish'd; how much more those that break their *Vows* to the Blessed God? If *Achan* deserv'd to be ston'd for robbing God of a little Devoted Wealth; What Judgments may they not fear, who Sacrilegiously Alienate their Devoted Selves? If *Nadab* and *Abihu's* Profaneness in offering strange fire, brought down fire from Heaven upon them that consum'd them; What may not they expect, whose Profaneness is risen to such an height? If *Joab's* perfidiousness to *Abner*, in covering so base a design against him under a friendly Vail, deserv'd such a Curse as it met with; What

What Curses will not fall on their heads, who deal thus perfidiously with God? If *Uzzah's* Audaciousness in but touching the Ark of God without just occasion, brought upon him present Death; What that God can inflict will not their Audaciousness expose them unto, who do as 'twere dare him to do his worst? If the *Israelites* ingratitude in forgetting and abusing the wonderful Goodness of God to them, and making such unsuitable Returns for it, was so severely punisht as we find it was; What Punishment can be great enough for those whose Ingratitude is incomperably greater.

AND now methinks 'tis high time, for any, who have read thus far, to look inward; and I would beg of them, that they would do so.

WHOEVER you are, if you are under Vows to God, spend a few thoughts by way of enquiry, Whether the before describ'd be not your case? If upon enquiry your Hearts smite you, your Consciences tell you, you are guilty; certainly it can't but amaze you: You can't surely think this a state and course to be rested in! Be deeply Humbled out of a sense of your great Sin, and Folly; and be awaken'd out of a sense of your Danger

Danger, which is so very great. Persist no longer in a breach of thy Sacred Vows, lest a successive train of Temporal Judgments follow thee; and those be accompany'd with Spiritual Judgments too; and both issue in Eternal ones, which are infinitely greater. Do but lay these things to Heart, and endeavour by repeated Reflections to drive them home, and methinks they can't but move you. And if you come but to be deeply sensible, let me tell you, Your case is not Hopeless: Your Sin, tho' great, is not Unpardonable: Pray therefore earnestly that your great guilt may be forgiven you; and change your course lest you Perish without Remedy.

CHAP. XI.

Of the Great Happiness of all those who are Serious in Making and Renewing their Sacramental Vows, and Sincere in Keeping them.

THOSE who trifle in, and willfully break their Sacramental Vows, are not more Miserable, than those who seriously make them, and faithfully (tho' imperfectly) keep them

them are happy. I shall therefore now endeavour to give as distinct a view of the ones Happiness, as I have done of the others Misery: But that neither the former Chapter nor this, may be wrested to serve different Purposes, than they were design'd for, it seems needful, that I premise this Caution: That as in the Chapter foregoing I aim'd at those, and those only, who live in such Breaches of their Sacred Vows as are inconsistent with Sincerity; so what I have now to subjoyn is safely applicable to all who can approve their own Hearts sincere. 'Tis not indeed possible for any Mortal Man, to assign such certain Universal Marks of Distinction, between such Breaches with God as are consistent with Sincerity, and such as are not so as will hold. So great is the variety of particular Circumstances, here falling under Consideration, as makes this a matter incapable of a general Determination. And for my part, I must declare, that were I able positively to certify Persons, what guilt they might contract, how far and how often they might break their Solemn Vows, and yet retain their Integrity, I should not dare to do it, for fear it should be abus'd. But yet 'tis certain there are
many

many sorts of Breaches, which may make Persons sincerity justly questionable and all wilful ones do so, more or less; and the more gross and habitual they are, the oftner they are repeated, and the more numerous and strong those Bonds are which Persons break, the more dubious do they make it: And on the other hand 'tis as certain that the most upright have considerable frailties, after their utmost care and pains, and watchfulness; they will be continually offending in many things. Who can pretend to steer exactly in such a strait? 'tis God alone can guide: When we have done our utmost, he alone can keep from dangerous mistakes and abuses. Let it suffice therefore to intimate, That I would have all those who find themselves chargeable with frequent wilful Breaches of their *Sacramental Vows*, give Conscience free leave to judge, whether they are not in the dismal state before describ'd: And on the other side, I would have all those who find in the main that sin grows weaker in them; and Grace stronger; that they particularly get ground of their own Iniquity; more abhor it; strive more against it; and are more griev'd at any discern'd vergencies towards it; to satisfy themselves

selves as to their own safety. Such as they, cannot but be sincere in their Sacramental Engagements ; and therefore are unspeakably happy.

I shan't go to heap up a Variety of Arguments, to prove the Happiness of such Persons ; (which were indeed all one as to go about to prove that there is a reality in Religion) but I shall only briefly shew wherein it lies, in order to the Allurement and Excitation of such as are yet Strangers to it ; and the Encouragement of those to whom it belongs, and their Comfort and Joy.

NOW we may take a View of the Happiness of those who seriously come under Sacramental Vows to God, and faithfully keep them, in the following Particulars.

1. THEY are drawn the nearer, and bound the faster to God, by every approach to him in the Ordinance of the Supper. They come to his Table, and sit down under his Shadow with great delight, and find his Fruit to be sweet to their Cant. 2. 3, 4. Taste ; and his Banner over them to be Love.

Whenever they come thither with prepared Hearts, their dear Lord refresheth them with his Love, replenisheth them with his Grace, encourages them in his Ways, and ravishes them with

N the

the sweetness of his Entertainment : He puts forth his Hand to lift them up nearer Heaven, and gives them a glympse of that which is to be their future Possession ; a tast of what is to be their everlasting Entertainment : He warms their Hearts afresh, till he makes them burn and glow ; and then their All is alas too little to offer up in Flames of Love, to him that hath so many ways endear'd himself to them, to him that hath so much power over them : A separation from him is what they can now less bear the thoughts of than ever. They give up themselves therefore to him anew, resolving they will never forsake him ; and by such renew'd Vows and Engagements, the Bond that fastens them to him is strengthen'd, and the awe of Sacred Things, which is so apt to wear off from the best is renew'd, and further riveted. Their Lord on his part as 'twere embraces them in his Arms, in token that the Bond is mutual, and as a Pledge that the Union between them shall be inseparable ; and he sends them in fresh supplys of Grace for their assistance and support. I am sensible how great unevenness there is in the best ; which may produce Spiritual Distempers, Decays, and Declensions,

ons, whereby those sensible Incomes and reviving Influences, that might otherwise be obtain'd in this Ordinance, may be very much abated : But something or other of this kind, more or less, hath been experienc'd at some such seasons by sincere Souls, which by those who know how to value things aright, cannot but be esteem'd far beyond any sensible Comfort or Refreshment.

2. IT is no mean part of the Happiness of such, that they take the most effectual method to secure their Peace, and make it solid, stable, and lasting ; they take the right course to maintain both *Peace with God*, and *Peace of Conscience*.

1. THOSE who are serious in making, and sincere in keeping Sacramental Vows, take an effectual course to maintain *Peace with God*. He can't slight or reject a sincere, self-resigning Soul. He can't but with Tenderness, Love, and Pity, behold a Soul that seriously endeavours to keep close to him ; he can't break with that Soul that he sees carefully shuns breaking with him : And tho' none use the utmost care they might ; tho' there are none (in our present lapsed State) but if they did would often halt and falter ; yet shall none of

their Breaches which are consistent with Sincerity, disannul or cancel that Treaty of Peace, between God and them, of which Christ is the powerful Mediator, or hinder their partaking of its blessed Effects. To this Treaty God sets his Seal at every Sacrament. The Devout Communicant at every such Solemnity thankfully accepts and joyfully embraces the Overtures of it; and renews Vows of an holy Course of Life. The sincere keeping these Vows secures God's Approbation and Special Favour. 'Tis Sin that is the only cause of separation between God and us; and no Sin more than the Violation of Solemn Vows; where this therefore is guarded against, by a steady course of faithful Obedience, there remains no cause for any considerable breach between God and us. For as for daily Infirmities where the Heart is upright, and the Course of the Life holy in the main, God hath promis'd he *will not remember them*, he'll on the Account of Christ's Intercession easily overlook and pass them by, and maintain Peace with us, upon a general Repentance of them, and Humiliation for them. Now what Man is so happy as he that hath Peace with the Blessed God? And who can be so like-
ly

ly to reach this Happiness, as he that is rightly sensible of, and that in the main lives up to those Vows of his that he is under? 'Tis true all Peace with God is the effect of Christ's Death, the Merit of his Blood, and the Fruit of his Purchase, and wherever 'tis bestow'd 'tis his Gift who is the Prince of Peace: But we may be well assur'd he'll bestow it on none who carry on Hostility against his Father, which is the case of all habitually wilful and allow'd Breakers of Sacramental Vows; we may be satisfy'd he'll deny it to none that are stedfast in his Covenant, and who earnestly study and faithfully endeavour to answer the Demands of it, which is the case of those I am speaking of: On them he'll freely bestow it; to them he'll take care to continue it, and the Blessed Consequences of it; so that nothing shall intervene considerably to interrupt it.

2. THEY also take the most effectual course to maintain *Peace of Conscience*: For what is *Peace of Conscience*, but an inward quiet and composure, arising from a well-grounded sense and hope, that things are as they should be between God and us. Whatever therefore hath any tendency to promote or maintain our Peace with God, doth na-

turally tend to make and keep us at Peace with our selves ; by preventing or allaying those disquieting Fears that naturally arise from an apprehension of the Divine Displeasure. That these Persons therefore take the best course to secure Peace within, is a genuine Consequence of the foregoing Consideration. There's no better ground for Peace of Conscience in the World than they enjoy, who devoutly renew their Vows to be the Lord's time after time at his Table, and live correspondently to them. Tho' they have a Body of Sin and Death sticking fast to them, under which they groan, and from which they never expect to be fully freed, so long as they are surrounded with a Vail of Flesh, and till Mortality comes to be swallow'd up of Life ; yet may they sensibly discern that things in the main are well with them, by their Hearts approv'd Integrity. It could not methinks but be a great comfort to *Peter* who had so shamefully deny'd his Master, to find himself able to make so solemn an Appeal to him as that ; *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I Love thee* ; So must it needs be a great quieting to serious Persons, to find themselves able, in His Most Sacred Presence, who is the Searcher

Joh. 21. 17.

Searcher of Hearts, notwithstanding their sense of their own Infirmities, which nothing can make them lose, to stand to it that they will be the Lord's, and his alone ; and to resolve and vow that nothing shall ever be discover'd to them to be his Will, how difficult soever it be, but his Grace enabling them, they will do it; and then afterwards to find that notwithstanding their many Frailties, the scope of their Lives answers the Resolution of their Hearts; their Vows in the main are kept, and not faithlessly broken. Peace may for some time be suspended, but it can't long be a Stranger to such Persons : And I think I need not intimate how happy this bespeaks them. Further,

3. SUCH Persons are out of the danger of many Temptations that others meet with ; and are fortify'd against those whereby they are most likely to be assaulted, which is no small Happiness. What a safeguard had *Joseph* against a strong Temptation wherewith he was assaulted, altho' 'twas both *insinuating* ; because of its suitableness to his Carnal Inclination, the means of privacy in it, and prospect of advancement upon his Compliance with it ; and at the same time *shaking* ; because of the

Gen. 39.

a

Disgrace which thro' his Mistresses Malice would attend his refusal ; what a safeguard (I say) had he, by this one thought strongly imprest upon him ? *How can I do this wickedness and sin against God ?* So what a safeguard are frequently repeated Vows, seriously made, and strongly imprest, against most Temptations ? Let such Persons be tempted to Sin, and they have this soon occurs to them, *How can I run into this and break my Vows to my God and Saviour ?* Whenever the Devil doth any thing to entice them to himself, the sense of their solemn Engagements strongly imprest, will put them upon lifting up their Hearts in a strain much like that of my Text ; *Thy Vows are upon me, O God.* This in many cases is such a Preservative, that where the Devil finds the sense thereof strong, he wont so much as assault. But suppose him by some or other of his subtle Artifices to have insinuated himself, and to have got any footing ; he is no sooner discover'd than resisted by those who retain a fixed sense of the Vows of God they are under ; and he can't long be resisted by any, but he'll be put to flight : For that's a standing Truth ; *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.* If those then

Jam. 4. 7.

then are happy that have a Preservative from the hurt of Temptation, (and who can question it) they are very happy that have a riveted sense of the Sacredness of their Sacramental Vows, and that set themselves to square their Lives by them: For none have a better, a more general, a more effectual and safe Preservative than they.

4. THEY have many excellent Promises upon record, which they upon just grounds may apply to themselves, and take comfort from, and live upon. I'll mention two or three. *All the Paths of the Lord are Mercy and Truth unto such as keep his Covenant and his Testimonies. The Mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; to such as keep his Covenant, and to those that remember his Commandments to do them.* Psal. 25. 10. Psal. 103. 17, 18. Who can express the Comfort which such Persons may derive from such Promises as these? As also from all those that are made to the Upright; and in general to the Doers of God's Commandments. Come to the New Testament Promises and you'll find few but what such Persons may justly apply to themselves. All the Blessings of the Covenant of Grace are promis'd to them, and they may safely depend upon them.
There's

There's one Promise of which so much notice is not taken as it deserves, which might methinks dwell in the thoughts of such. *He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest my self to him.* Such an one hath *Christ's Commandments*, not only in his hand, but in his heart; and he keeps them, *i. e.* Faithfully obeys them; and thereby shews the sincerity of his Love to his dear Saviour; both the Father and Son therefore shall love him; and *Christ will manifest himself to them: i. e.* He will open and unfold to such those Gospel Mysteries whereto others notwithstanding all their light are real strangers; He will impart a full knowledge of himself to them, and fill them with his Spirit; which is a *Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation*. He will manifest the Secrets of Divine Wisdom, and the traces of Eternal Love to them, so far as their present capacities will bear; and in the future Life, he will lay himself and all those Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge that lie hid in him, open to their view, that they may for ever entertain themselves with their Contemplation, and Enrich themselves by a constant

constant Derivation. Such Promises as these that may be so comfortably apply'd by sincere Covenant Keepers with God unto themselves, make their state and condition Exceeding Happy.

5. THEY are provided with what may help to support them, under any Crosses, Troubles or Afflictions they may be Exercis'd with. Come what will they are safe. They may stand their ground without giving way, they need not be terrify'd or dismay'd: And Oh what a Happiness is this! Who knows what Personal or Domestick Troubles they may meet with e'er they Dye? And how Terribly and Violently they may be Assaulted as strong as they apprehend their mountain to stand? Who can fore-see what Publick Calamities await us, wherein all particular Persons must unavoidably be sharers? now for Persons to be able in whatever troubles they meet with, to say with the Church, *All this is come upon us, yet* Psal. 44.
have we not forgotten thee; neither have we 17, 18.
dealt falsely in thy Covenant: Our Heart is
not turn'd back, neither have our steps de-
clin'd from thy way: For Persons then to be able to look back on their Sacramental Transactions, and Remember the Seriousness and Devotion wherewith they
 oft

oft have Renew'd their Vows to the Lord at his Table ; and to look back on their Lives and find a general, stated correspondency thereto, would be a spring of greater Refreshment to them than is well conceivable by them who have not had some experience of it. Let's suppose a Person to meet with great Distress in his Mind, in his Body, in his Estate or any other way ; if seriously looking upwards, he can be able to say

Pfal. 18. 20. with David, I have kept the way of the Lord, I have not wickedly departed from my God ; it must needs be a great Comfort and Support to him. Incredible is the Consolation which such Persons lay in against trying Times they may be call'd to pass thro' in the course of their Lives ; Great the Supports wherewith they are provided against the time when they shall be under the assaults of Death the King of Terrors : To be able then to look back on seriously renew'd and faithfully perform'd Sacramental Vows, will make those Pangs easy at which Nature trembles ; 'twill make their Passage into another World safe and comfortable : Who then can express their Happiness ? And then,

6thly and Lastly, THEY take the most Effectual Course to secure themselves from

from falling away. That of the Perseverance of the Saints is a very comfortable Doctrine; and rightly understood is so far from an evil and vicious tendency, as some imagine, that it tends every way to make us better. Now the satisfying Assurance of a true Christians Perseverance, is built on these three grounds: *The Favour and Love of God to him; the Sufficiency of the Divine Assistance; And the Conscience of his own Integrity.* That these Persons take the best course to secure the *Favour and Love of God*, hath before been made appear. What can hinder those who often seriously Federally transact with God and are stedfast in his Covenant, from hoping for every thing from him, which beloved Children may expect from a tender and kind Father? As for the *Sufficiency of Divine Grace*, they have no reason to question it: And that they shall have it imparted to them in the measures and degrees wherein they need it, is the purport of many promises, which they upon just ground may apply to themselves. And then as for the *Conscience of their own Integrity*, on which the Personal Comfort of the two foregoing grounds depends, none are so likely to get and keep it as those who

who often with great Solemnity renew the acts of their Self-Dedication to the Blessed God, repeat their Vows of all prescribed Duty, and in the main in their whole course demean themselves suitably. What can shake such persons hopes of Perseverance? Their frequent slips and failings need not: For tho' they are to be lamented and bewail'd, yet do they not forfeit those aids of Grace whereby they may be enabled to hold out; yet do they not cut of the entail of Divine Favour, whereby this perseverance is secur'd. It is unquestionable that many may go far in Religion, and yet fall off at last, and come to nothing; they may begin well and hold on for a time, and for want of holding out lose the Crown, that the Gospel propounds as a Reward to the Faithful. But that which I assert is this; That those who are serious in the frequent repeating, and afterwards faithful in keeping their Sacramental Vows, may on this very Consideration, bottom a comfortable and well grounded hope of their own Perseverance; that they shall not be in the number of them that fall away. I am far from thinking that any are so far out of all danger as to have any reason to grow secure; and if they do grow
se

secure and careless; 'tis a plain evidence to me, that they are not yet out of Danger : But yet I doubt not but there are such things, as that those who do them shall never fall : And thus much I think may be plainly learnt from 2 *Pet.* 1. 10. And of this number I take this course to be, of serious Repeating and faithful paying Sacramental Vows. For it argues the Heart to be establisht with Grace ; it seems to imply an incapacity of forsaking their Saviour whose Love hath taken so fast hold of them, and bound them so firmly to himself ; it argues an incapacity of being guilty of such crying Provocations as those must be whereby the Blessed Spirit should be quencht, or God oblig'd to desert them ; it argues Persons to be arriv'd at so fixed an habit of Goodness, as cannot be lost and eradicated. Needs then must it argue unspeakable Happiness in their state who have arriv'd to it. Who ought therefore certainly to be fill'd with Thankfulness, and transported with Joy ; and will be inexcusable, if their Souls don't Magnify the Lord, if their Spirit don't Rejoyce in God their Saviour.

CHAP. XII.

Of the difficulty of Living up to our Sacramental Vows, with that Exactness that we ought. With the Solution of some common Cases relating thereto.

NOTHING's more easie to be observ'd, Than that many are the imperfections which attend those who are most faithful in paying their Sacramental Vows : Hardly any thing creates some Persons so much perplexity as this : And those must be great strangers to Religious matters, who know not that 'tis very difficult to walk evenly with God, closely to follow Christ, to live under the conduct of the Divine Spirit, to live by Faith, to lead such Holy, Heavenly, Circumspect and Mortify'd Lives, as Christianity obliges to, and as we in our often Repeated Sacred Vows engage to do. A distinct handling of this matter may be of common which I shall therefore endeavour in this method.

1. I'LL enquire how it comes about that the keeping our Sacramental Vows
with

with any Exactness, should be so very difficult as 'tis found to be.

2. I'LL lay down some general Considerations, to prevent Peoples apprehending it to be a more difficult matter, than it really is.

3. I'LL solve two or three Particular Cases, which commonly occur with reference to this matter.

1. THEN let us a little enquire how it comes about that the Keeping our Sacramental Vows with any exactness, is so very difficult as 'tis found to be; which is a needful enquiry to prevent mistakes. Our ascribing the difficulty in this case to a false cause, might lead us into many Errors, To prevent which, I shall lay down three Observations by way of Negation; and as many by way of Affirmation.

By way of Negation let it be observ'd, That the difficulty of keeping our Sacramental Vows, arises not,

1. FROM any rigorous demands of our Holy Religion. We Vow time after time at the Lords Table Obedience to the whole will of God, so far as he is pleased to make it known to us: When we have done, we find it indeed very difficult to do as we have engag'd; but this difficulty arises not from any over rigorousness in any part of Gods Revealed
O Will;

Will; it arises not from any unnecessary over harsh, or needlessly severe and strict commands, which among others we have vow'd Obedience to; No, we have not to do with an hard Master: Tho' he had a right to have prescrib'd us whatever he thought good, yet hath he temper'd his Prerogative with great Wisdom and Love, and suited his Prescriptions every way to our greatest Good and best Advantage: So that which way soever we cast our Eyes, we can find no part of the Duty we have vow'd to our God and Saviour, but what is most highly reasonable; but what did we without prejudice or partiality study and mind our own truest interest, we should readily comply and fall in with. The difficulty therefore in the case would be unjustly ascrib'd to any thing in the nature of the Duties which are the matter of our Vows. Nor,

2. IS this difficulty to be ascrib'd to any natural Incapacity on our parts to comply with the demands of our Holy Religion. We can't say but that were we duly serious, observant, vigorous, resolute, diligent, and watchful, we might pay the Vows that we make and often repeat to God; we can't say but that if we us'd that intentness and application which such a matter deserves, and calls for at our hands, we might live

con-

continually like those who are consecrated and devoted to our God and Saviour ; making his Glory our end, his Law our Rule, and his Pattern our Copy, which is the summary of our Vows. We can't truly say, That any of the Commands whereto we have vow'd Obedience, require any thing of us whereof we are utterly incapable, any thing that is impossible to us, would we set our selves to it with that Seriousness and Earnestness, that becomes those who are under such strong Bonds, such Sacred and Solemn Engagements. Neither,

3. Can we justly ascribe this Difficulty to any backwardness in God to give us needed Aids. We can't truly say that therefore we do fall so short in paying our Vows, because God is wanting to us in those Supernatural Assistances, without which such poor weak Creatures as we, are able to do nothing to purpose. We should be very injurious to God, should we pretend that he was wanting to his Word and Promise of sending us in help by his Blessed Spirit, which he declares himself so ready to bestow on them that ask it of him. No alas, 'tis not therefore difficult for us to be so Holy and Heavenly, and Patient and Mortify'd, as we time after time vow we will be, because God is sparing in the Communications of his

Grace, on which all our hopes of success must needs be founded ; for he is ever free and open handed, he is never wanting to us, but 'tis we that are wanting to our selves.

BY way of Affirmation therefore on the other hand, Let it be observ'd, that the difficulty of Keeping and Living up to our Sacramental Vows, arises from a triple Cause conjunctly.

1. FROM the great Slipperiness and Deceitfulness of our *Hearts*: Which is such as that many times when they seem well fixt and firmly bent, they shall on a sudden *turn a side like a deceitful Bow*. Good Impressions that seem'd strong, shall soon be lost and worn off by contrary impressions, for want of a due guard which few take care to keep up. Would but our Hearts keep in an even tenour, could we retain that warm sense of the things of God which we sometimes feel ; could we maintain the same Holy Resolution we sometimes find excited in a Sacrament ; the difficulty we are so apt to complain of would soon vanish ; we should find the paying of our Vows an easie thing : But herein our slippery Hearts deceive us : For let us be never so warm to day, we shall it may be be cold to morrow. We feel our Hearts so often change, that there's no knowing how to reckon upon them

them, and where to find them; and it requires great Application to keep them in any fixedness of Temper. Now this being no easie matter, renders the paying our Sacramental Vows so difficult.

2. THE prevalence of Inward Corruption is another grand cause of this difficulty. Our Inward Corruption is like tinder; 'twill catch fire upon every spark. And 'tis so riveted that there's no total laying it aside but together with our Bodies. It is like an impure Fountain continually casting forth mire and dirt, in order to the checking the pure motions of the Spirit of Grace. 'Tis very strong and powerful in most: 'Twill be continually striving against the force of those Divine Considerations whereby our minds should be govern'd, and kept in awe; and pulling of us back when we are with any seriousness attempting to answer our Christian Obligations and Engagements. Could we quell and master this contrary principle in us, we should find it an easie thing to live up to our Sacred Vows; But this is a painful and laborious task, of which we are apt to be very soon weary, and therefore is it that we find that so difficult a matter.

3. THE many bewitching Temptations we are constantly beset with are great Occasions of this difficulty. We

rub have a subtle Devil to deal with, who'll
 lay all the curbs in our way that possibly
 he can; who so surrounds us on all hands
 with snares, that we can hardly take an
 inadvertent step without falling into some
 or other of them. Let us but set our selves
 in earnest to live up to our Engagements,
 and he'll start a thousand discouragements
 to clog and damp us: He'll interpose
 with a variety of occasions that shall seem
 to be necessary, on purpose to take off our
 intention and divert our thoughts, till we
 by degrees grow cold: He'll make our Callings,
 our Relations, our Successes, our Disappointments,
 our Comforts, or our Crosses, or any thing
 that comes in the way, his engines to hinder
 us: He'll call in our flesh to his assistance,
 to the voice whereof 'tis difficult not to listen.
 He'll entice us by charming Insinuations;
 or affright us by Terrors; and select that
 method of dealing with us that we are least
 able to resist, and leave nothing unattempted
 that lies in his power to hinder us from that
 Holy, Christian, Exemplary Life, which is the
 matter of our Sacramental Vows: No wonder
 therefore that 'tis so difficult. Nay, I believe
 most Christians may generally observe, That
 when they have thought themselves most serious
 at a Sacrament, when their hearts have seem'd
 most

most earnest and resolute in repeating their Solemn Vows to God and their Saviour there ; then is the Devil more than ordinarily busie in his onsets and attacks; then is he starting unthought of diversions to cool and damp them ; then shall he with unusual earnestness follow them with Temptations ; till he finds their Spirits cool, their Resolutions flag, and they return to their wonted Remissness. And having given this short account of the rise of the difficulty of living up to our Vows with any exactness ; I proceed,

2. TO lay down some general Considerations to prevent our apprehending this to be a more difficult matter than it really is. 'Tis indeed difficult to keep and pay our Christian Vows ; but still not so difficult as some are apt to imagine it : which these four Considerations among many that might be alleg'd, do sufficiently evince.

1. Perfect sinless Obedience is not the matter of our Sacramental Vows, is not necessary in order to our Acceptance : It is indeed to be thirsted and aspir'd after, but we may despair of reaching it, till we come to be reckon'd among the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect : We are to be ever reaching towards it, but to vow that we will reach it, is needlessly to hamper our selves, by binding our
O 4
selves

selves to an utter impossibility. We are at every *Sacrament* to vow against all Sin, *i. e.* against a willing loving Entertainment of any Sin whatever : And this *Vow* is sincerely kept by all who hate and strive against all Sin, and forbear every wilful Sin, and are humbled under the sense of all their Remaining Imperfections, being far more desirous to be rid of them, than to retain them. Our vows to Christ at his Table against Sin, are much of the same nature with the Promise we may make to a Physician, that we'll be careful of our Health : Such a Promise to a Physician don't at all intimate that we'll never be sick more ; no more do our *Vows* to Christ that we will never sin more ; but such a Promise to a Physician would imply, that we would not wilfully bring Diseases on our selves, but would use the means that are appointed to preserve and encrease our Health ; and that whatever Sickness cleaves to us should be our Trouble, and we would desire and earnestly endeavour to be freed from it. So our *Vows* at the Lords Table bind us carefully to regard the health of our Souls ; to look upon Sin as a Spiritual Sickness, and therefore never to fall in Love with it, but to do our best towards its utter Removal. Even those infirmities the best are liable to, are not to be cherisht

cherisht and pleaded for, any more than we would plead for a little of the Head-ach, or any bodily pain. We should not by our good will be guilty so much as of a vain thought, or an Idle Word, or at all cherish the least motion to any Sin; but yet God doth not require of us positively that we will never sin more; nor are we to look on our selves as perfidious breakers of Sacramental Vows, because we find sundry imperfections cleave to us, so long as we from our Hearts abhor them; and do ordinarily overcome temptations to more gross and wilful Sins. That which we are properly to vow at every Sacrament with reference to Sin is this; that we won't live and allow our selves in it; and that we'll keep up a constant struggle and combat against it. The Gospel finds us Sinners, and supposes us such in its first grand Address to us, which is the Offer of a Saviour: And tho' it works a great Change where it is heartily entertain'd, yet doth it not make us quite cease to be Sinners: It makes us indeed cease to be obstinate, resolute, harden'd, habitually wilful, impenitent Sinners; but altho' it works Repentance and Faith, and all other saving Grace in us, yet doth it not root out all the Remains of Sin out of us: And where Sin remains it will show it self at times.

To

To suppose it necessary in order to our Salvation, that we should be free from sin, were to make it not only difficult, but impossible. We must take heed of this mistake therefore, lest we needlessly trouble our selves, by fancying this matter more difficult than it is.

2. We Vow nothing at all at the Sacrament in our own strength. So weak and impotent are we in Spirituals, that if we had no higher strength than our own to depend on, we could not safely come under the least engagement; for we might easily foresee we should certainly fall short. In our own Strength we could not safely vow or promise the performance of the least duty, or an avoidance of the least sin; much less a firm adherence to God, in a course of holy Universal Obedience, which is the purport of our Sacramental Engagements. To suppose it necessary for us of our selves without superiour Aids to keep our Sacramental Vows, is another way of representing our doing so, not only difficult but impossible; and therefore carefully to be avoided.

3. He to whom Vows are made on our part, engages on his part to supply us with all needed strength. Christ hath ~~we~~ has'd the Aids of the Spirit for all his hearty Followers: And whoever comes

Come to the Lord's Table with an earnest desire of Grace to be there given them from Christ, to enable them to fulfil the Promises, and pay the Vows they there renew, they may very confidently expect strength and assistance from him. Were it not for this, which is the purport of divers Promises in the Covenant of Grace, there were no hope for us: We might vow and vow as long as we would, all would signify nothing. How difficult soever therefore we find it to live up to Sacramental Vows, in this may we take comfort, That *the Grace of Christ is sufficient for us, and his Strength* 2 Cor. 12. 9. *is made perfect in Weakness: And tho' without him we can do nothing.* Yet *thro' his* Joh. 15. 5. *Strength we may do all things. i. e.* We may Phil. 4. 13. do all things requir'd in an acceptable manner: We may do all that we at his Table vow we will do, so as to be accepted. Tho' therefore thro' the great Disorders of our Spirits, the many Temptations whereto we are on all hands incident, and our own weakness it be exceeding difficult, to live up to our Sacramental Vows, yet Strength and Aids from Heaven, which those that keep in the way of their Duty may comfortably expect and hope for, will not only render it possible; but by degrees abate the Difficulty, and make it easy.

4. THE

4. THE Gospel Covenant leaves room for Repentance of our frequent Breaches, and manifold Defects and Infirmitys. Our Sacramental Vows suppose not that we should live without slips and stumbles : (Unspeakably wretched were our case, should they presently cast us out of the Divine Favour ;) but they oblige us upon discerning our Falls to rise again by true Repentance, and to have recourse anew to the Blood of Christ for Mercy, and to his Spirit for fresh strength ; resolving to take more heed to our Ways for time to come : And thus doing we need not fear being accepted.

SOME indeed are by this Consideration so encourag'd in presumption, that they run a round of sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning ; giving themselves scope, and then thinking that a slight asking God pardon when they have done will be sufficient : But by this course they wretchedly mock God, and egregiously deceive and endanger their own Souls. But altho' it be liable to be thus abus'd, and actually is so by many presumptuous daring Sinners, it yet remains a truth ; and a very comfortable truth it is to sincere Souls, for whom God hath by this means provided great relief. Let us vow against Sin never so seriously and solemnly ; let us endeavour to live
up

up to such Vows never so diligently, never so carefully, we yet after all shall find the Scripture true, which declares, That *there is no Man that sinneth not. And in many things we offend all. And if we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us.* But here's our Comfort, *If we confess our Sins, i. e. truly repent of them, God is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*

1 Kings

8. 46.

Jam. 3. 2.

1 Joh. 1.

8.

ver. 9.

From these four Considerations taken together, I draw this plain, single, useful Inference: That tho' our experience of the difficulty of living up to our Sacramental Vows, be a proper Call to Humiliation, yet is not a just occasion for sinking discouragement. A Call to Humiliation indeed it is, to find that we in any measure fail of our Duty to God, of whose Benignity, Love and Grace we have had so great experience: That when we have done our best, our Returns to our dear Saviour for his Redeeming Love, whereby he bought us to himself with an invaluable Price, fall so short, & are so defective: That such solemn Tyes and Bonds as we are continually renewing, repeating, and further strengthening are so little able to hold our slippery Hearts fast to our God and Saviour: That after all our *serious Vows* and Promises Sin should be so powerful in us, Temptations so prevalent with us,

and

and the great Motives and Incentives wherewith our Holy Religion presents us, should have so little influence upon us: But yet all this is not a just occasion for sinking Discouragement. For tho' we are very imperfect, yet may we still be acceptably faithful: Tho' we have abundant experience of our own weakness, yet is Christ ready to strengthen us; tho' we often stumble and fall, yet may we be accepted upon our Repentance. What Christ therefore once said upon a particular occasion to poor fearful doubting *Thomas*, say I in his Name to all fearful, doubting, but sincere Souls, *Be not faithless but believing.*

I now proceed to the solving two or three particular *Cases* that commonly occur with reference to this matter: Under which I'll add some special Considerations suiting each *Case*, to the general ones before laid down, that may be apply'd to all. The first of these *Cases* is of one who never was at the Lord's Table, who by this difficulty of answering the Engagements he should there come under is kept and affrighted thence. The second of one that hath oft been there, but is afraid again and again to renew Vows there, which he knows he can so difficulty keep. The third of one that oft goes there, and oft renews his Vows, but

is discourag'd by his frequent Breaches. The foremention'd Difficulty lies at the bottom in each of these Cases.

The first Case.

Therefore may a Person say, Do I forbear coming to the Lord's Table, because I am there to come under Vows, which I know before hand I shan't keep? Withal I know my Sins, after such a Solemnity, will be much aggravated, and my Guilt be the greater; it seems to me therefore better to forbear and stay away, than to run myself on such a Precipice. If I come to the Lord's Table, I am to Vow against all Sin; but this Vow I dare not make, because I am satisfy'd I should not keep it.

I Answer: 1. We are to vow nothing at a Sacrament but what we are antecedently oblig'd to; nothing but what is absolutely necessary in order to our Happiness. We make nothing our Duty by our Sacramental Vows, that was not so before; but only bind our selves to that to which we are sensible we were before oblig'd. We bind our selves to no unnecessaries; but only engage to adhere to that God in whose Favour lies our Life; we renounce sin, which alone is enough to make us miserable; we vow Holiness of Life, which is the only way to Happiness. To say therefore we know before hand that we should not keep the Vows

Vows we should make at a Sacrament, is to consign our selves over to certain Misery ; for unless we do that which Sacramental Vows import, we are unavoidably undone for ever.

2. IF thou dost not seriously intend to keep thy Sacramental Vows, I own thou hadst better not make them. If thou in thy Heart really dislikest the Holy Laws and Government of Christ, take not an Oath, make not solemn *Vows* in a mockery that thou wilt be subject to him, which thou before intendest not to keep. Beware how thou playest with Edge Tools. These are serious things ; wherefore either be serious and sincere in thy meddling with them, or keep at a distance. But then withal take notice, that by thy forbearing on this Account to come to the Lord's Table, thou renouncest all the Benefits of Christ's Mediation and Purchase.

3. THERE's no difficulty in any part of the *Vows* we come under at a *Sacrament*, but what is superable by a diligent, serious, painful Christian, aided with Divine Strength. We run upon Mistakes if we imagine there is any other ground for fear that we should not be able to keep the *Vow* we at the Lord's Table should come under, but our own Carelessness and Sloth, Negligence, Carnality

nalities, and sinful Self-Indulgence: These given way to, will make not only our keeping any *Vows* we might come under to God, but our Salvation also, not only difficult but impossible. The *Vow* we are at the Lord's Table suppos'd to come under, carries no other difficulty in it, than what by the help of Grace, in the use of vigorous Endeavours, we might get over. Take it therefore which way we will, the Plea of this Case is unaccountable. If we are in earnest for Christ, 'tis foolish to let such a fear as this keep us from his Table: If we are not so, 'tis vain to plead this fear as a reason for staying away; when in reality 'tis our love of Sin, and unwillingness to come under the Government of Christ, is the true Cause of our backwardness to come thither. Which all those who live in the neglect of the Lord's Supper, would do well to consider.

The second Case.

I, says another, have oft been at the Lord's Table, and there come under Vows to God; but have so often broke them, and find it so difficult to keep them, that I cannot tell how to think it my Duty again to renew them: For how can it be my Duty to run a Round of Vowing and Breaking, which I find by Experience will be my Case.

I Answer :

1. IT may be thou thinkest them Breaches of *Sacramental Vows*, that are not so : If thou keepest up but a sincere Resolution to do what in thee lies to please God, and takest care not to run wilfully into those Actions which thou knowest are contrary to his Will ; how numerous soever thy Infirmities be, thou art not chargeable, as a perfidious Breaker of thy Vows.

2. IT may be thou forgettest the part that Repentance must bear, in every true Christians Life : Thou thinkest, it may be, to make work for Repentance, is to make thy Case next kin to Desperate : Whenas we are all making work for it daily, and cannot in the state we are in do otherwise : To be continually Renewing our Repentance, is our constant Duty ; and to be accepted upon our Repentance, is a great Mercy.

3. TO forbear Renewing thy Vows, because thou hast fallen, is to give the Devil a great Advantage against thee. For by keeping thee from it, he keeps thee from that which would the most of any thing (if seriously manag'd) help thee to rise, and resist him with a Renew'd Vigour.

4. SIN fallen into, can never make the Obligation to Duty cease. God obliges thee

thee to come frequently to his Table, and there renew thy Engagements to be his, and his alone. Whatever thy Sins be, this remains thy Duty. As for thy Sins, thou oughtst with grief and sorrow of Heart to lament and bewail them, and seriously to repent of them : But plain Duty is not to be neglected. To neglect Duty because we have sinned, is to add Sin to Sin, and to neglect this Duty especially, is to refuse the use of that means which is most likely to help us to strength against Sin.

5thly and lastly, Consider, That to forbear Renewing our Vows, because of the difficulty of keeping them, argues either an Impatience of Christs Yoak, and Tiredness with his Bonds, as too close and strait, and therefore not to be born ; or a distrust of his Promise of affording help and strength to enable us to live up to them to such a degree as that we shall be accepted. And either of these are plainly very dishonourable to Christ, and therefore are wholly to be watch'd against.

The Third Case.

We, say some, are so sensible of our Duty, that we continue vowing time after time, at the Lords Table ; but still to our sorrow, we find we break our Vows ; nay, we know not how to keep them ; we are there-

fore much disheartened : To forbear Renewing our Vows we are afraid ; and yet keep them we find we can't : And between the one and the other we are in great Perplexity. What's to be done in this great strait ?

I Answer hereto, I can only put this Question, close to the Consciences of the Complainants, Whether they are known wilful Sins, or common Infirmities, that are the Root of their Trouble ? If they find themselves chargeable with the former, their only way to Comfort, Peace, or Safety, is to avoid them : They must take great Care, least by living in the neglect of the Holy Communion, they give the Devil Advantage against them ; and if they come to it at its stated Returns, they must take heed least by a wilful breaking of the Bonds they renew there, they pull down a Curse on themselves, instead of a Blessing. But if they are common Infirmities that disturb them, I would suggest these following things to their Consideration.

1. TO have an humble sense of our own Insufficiency and Weakness, kept upon our Spirits, is a great Advantage. It will preserve us from that Self-confidence and Security which betrays to many a Temptation ; and 'twill put us upon seeking earnestly for strength from
Heaven,

Heaven, of which it discovers to us so great need: And therefore 'tis a great Mercy, and ought not to be esteem'd at all a Burthen or Grievance.

2. TO be enabled to persist in our Duty, notwithstanding Discouragements, is also a great Mercy. It argues a firm bent of Heart for God, and a fixed Resolution of Adherence to him, whatever befalls us: which is very pleasing to God, and should also be very comfortable to us; and therefore we should be thankful for it.

3. WE should take heed of Imagining that Unavoidable Infirmities, Common Inadvertencies, or any such Slips as are consistent with Sincerity, cast us out of the Divine Favour. This were to entertain unbecoming Thoughts of God, to disparage Christs Mediation, to mistake the the tenour of the Gospel, and gratifie our grand Enemy the Devil.

4. WHILE we keep on in the Course of our Duty, in an humble Dependance on Christ, we may comfortably hope our strength may encrease; and proportionably as that decreases, shall we find the difficulty of that Holiness of Life we vow to him at his Table, abate and wear off.

5. OUR frequent Slips and Falls, should cause us to redouble our Watchfulness;

and to keep the stricter Guard on our selves ; which would be, as 'twere, to fight against the Devil with his own Weapons.

6. and Lastly, TAKE this for thy comfort, If thou art but brought to such a frame as this ; to be truly grieved that Sin and Satan should have so much Interest in thee ; and do'st heartily desire that God would cast them forth ; and take possession of thee for himself, thou art in a good way to a Deliverance. If God sees thee labouring under the Burden of thy Corruptions, which after all thy Vows, and thy utmost care against them, do still too often prevail over thee ; if he sees thee tugging with thy backward Heart, to bring it to him, he will soon afford thee help. Do but hold on, and persevere, and thou wilt find, according to *Philip. II. 12.* that in time God will work in thee to do, as well as to will, of his own good pleasure.

CHAP. XIII.

DIRECTIONS *that may help us to live more Correspondently to our many Solemn Sacramental Vows.*

WHERE a thing appears difficult, help is generally acceptable : I shall therefore do what I can to afford it, in

in the Case of Living up to our many sacred Vows. The foregoing Chapter will from most be apt to draw forth this further Enquiry ; How may we come to live correspondently to our many solemn Tyes ? What course must we take, that the sense of our Christian Vows may not wear off ? What should we particularly do, after we have Renew'd our Vows to our God and Saviour at his Table, in order to the fastening of our Hearts, and engaging our selves effectually to answer and pay them ? For whose satisfaction, I lay down the following Directions and Cautions.

1. BEWARE of Imagining that so weighty an Action as that of Renew'd *Vowing* and *Covenanting*, terminates in it self ; and that all's done, when the Ordinance of the Supper is over. Take not a *Sacrament* for a *Charm*, that is to work Magically ; and to make you better by an unperceivable sort of a Physical Operation ; for that were to turn it into an Useless and Unprofitable Ceremony. Don't think that your joyning in it, altho' you were, it may be, in a serious frame, during its Celebration, is enough for you : But reckon upon it, that God minds your Carriage as much afterwards as at that instant, if not more : For the great design of that Ordinance is to

be an Engagement to, and help for Holiness of Life. God was there attempting to bind you fast to himself and his Son; and you profess and pretended to bind your selves: What can shew that you in this were sincere and hearty, but your future holy and exact walking? Whereby only you can rightly Answer the end of this Institution. To sit down then contented, with the bare promising, over the sacred Symbols at the holy Supper, that we will be the Lords, as thinking that we thereby sufficiently acquit our selves; would be all one, as if in a matter of vast consequence between Man and Man, and on which much depends, we should satisfy our selves with signing a Contract, and thereby obliging our selves under large Penalties; thinking our selves thereupon presently discharg'd, without taking any care to fulfil Articles: Alas! who would care a rush for such a Contract, if he knew the engag'd Party would look no further? So how can God at all regard those *Vows* of ours, that stop even in the making; and that *Sacramental Seriousness* that ends with the Ordinance. If we rest in the Work done, and think that enough, 'tis no wonder at all, if any good impressions made, are as the *Morning Cloud*, and as the *Early Dew*, which quickly passeth away.

2. Endeavour

2. ENDEAVOUR by after serious and warm Meditation, to rivet and strengthen your renew'd Resolutions Vows and Promises. Think seriously with whom you have been transacting, and what you have been doing.

Take pains with your own Hearts in your Retirements, to drive things home. Endeavour to fix the impressions you were under when you had the emblems of your Crucifi'd Lord before your Eyes, so firmly on your Hearts, as that nothing may be able to deface them. Think how odious sin in general then appear'd to you; how loathsome your own iniquities seem'd to be, when you anew resolv'd against them: And how necessary, aimable and lovely a Christ appear'd to you, when you anew Consecrated your selves to his Service; and how firmly then you seem'd bent against your Lusts, and for your Saviour: How Resolute to shake off every weight, especially the sin that most easily besets you, and to run with Patience and Perseverance the Holy Race that is set before you. Think how you blam'd and condemn'd your selves for your past sin and folly; and how asham'd you were to reflect on your own vileness; and with what seeming warmth and vigour you Vow'd, thro' the Assistance of Divine Grace

Grace, to lead an Holy and a Pious Life. Say each one to your selves, Behold O my Soul, I have enter'd into a new League of Friendship with God ; a League Firm and Strong, and Solemn and Perpetual ; I must not, I cannot, I dare not, I will not draw back. I am come under new Bonds to my God and Saviour ; Bonds that will never be cancell'd ; Bonds that can never be discharg'd ; and therefore I'll endeavour to be always paying the Debt I owe. My Saviour hath made himself and all his Benefits over to me, in an Everlasting Covenant; what could I then do less then return my self back to him ? Was not this Reasonable, Just, and Fit ? His I ought to be, his I have engag'd to be, and his I will be. Drive things thus home to a peremptory Conclusion, and you'll find the Benefit of it. This will be a satis-fying Evidence to you, that your Vows were not the effect of a meer Passionate Transport, which is flitting and transient and soon worn off ; but of a firm bent of Heart which is vastly better. Think then seriously of what hath past between God and you, and leave not off ruminating on the matter, till you are brought to a fixed point ; Resolving to stand to what you have done: Till you can cry out with *David*, Psal. 119. 106, *I have sworn and I will perform it, so keep thy*

thy Righteous Judgments. Some time in the Evening, after we have been at the Communion, spent with this design, might be very useful: We should then find this work easier than afterwards. And as bad as we are, we are not so chilly, but if we were at all serious, we should find some sense of what we have been about remaining on our Hearts, which would be an advantage to us in our setting our selves seriously to drive things home. If we did the like the next morning after; nay if we did something of the same kind every day almost (tho' it should be but short) 'twould turn to a good account, and we should have no cause to repent our pains.

3. OFTEN recollect and think on the Mischiefs, you your selves have found by your so frequent Breaches of your past Solemn Vows. How sadly your peace hath been thereby interrupted, your Consciences wounded, your Graces weakened, your Enemies gratify'd, the Holy Spirit griev'd, and your motions Heavenward retarded. Have you not found & tasted it to be a bitter thing to play fast and loose with God; to falsify your Engagements, and break his Bonds? whence is it that he frowns upon you, and withdraws his presence and his aids in any measure from you? Whence is it that
you

you go on so heavily, still mourning and complaining, that you are backward unto Duties, cold and lifeless in them, and little if at all the better for them? Whence is it that the Devil hath gain'd so much influence upon you, and gotten so great an Advantage against you, and so easily catches you by his wiles and snares, which you formerly so carefully avoided? Whence is it that that little Good, that little Grace that is in you is so withering pining and languishing? Whence is it that you who once were chearful in Religion, having comfortable hope thro' Grace of your good Estate, are now so despondent and drooping, and so full of Doubts and Fears? Is not all this chargeable upon your frequent and sad Breaches of your Sacramental Vows? Think of it then seriously; Recollect all the sad Consequences that have thence ensued, as exactly and faithfully as you can; and then think how by the like breaches of fresh Vows, you expose yourselves to the like breaches for time to come, and that in a higher degree than before; and this certainly if any thing will help to quicken you to Care, Constancy and Fidellity, in living up to your Renew'd Engagements.

4. **THINK** also often with your selves, how happy you might have been had you
been

been but faithful to your Sacramental Vows and Promises. To what a confirm'd State might you by this time have been advanc't? To how flourishing a pitch of Grace might you have arriv'd? How much Honour might you have brought to God? How much Good might you have done in the World? What Peace Delight and Pleasure might you have found in the ways of God? How free and undisturb'd might your Communion with him have been? And how well establish'd might you have been by this time against all Assaults, had you but honestly paid the Vows you have often made and repeated to your God and Saviour? Little do you know what your false heartedness hath lost you. Little are you aware of what your Carelessness and Unfaithfulness to your God hath depriv'd you. Think of it seriously after every Sacrament. Reason the case with thy self. What O my Soul have I not lost enough already! Hath not my Treachery and Sacrilege and Falseness been detrimental enough to me already! Shall I still go on to break my Vows, and rob my God, and damage my self, and take a course that will deprive me of that Peace and Pleasure, and Sweetness, and much of the Profit too, which Religion is capable of affording me? Such thoughts

as these pursu'd home after every Sacrament, could not but be helpful to stir and quicken, rouze and warm us, and keep us close to him, to whom we are a new Devoted.

5. RUN not too hastily into the World after the Renewal of your Solemn Vows. Too hasty changes are easily observ'd to be pernicious to the Body ; and they are full as hurtful to the Soul. For a Man that hath been in violent motion, whereby he is well heated, to wash in cold Water, would be the way for him to chill his spirits, and bring upon himself a deadning damp : So for them who have been well warm'd with Spiritual Matters ; have been seriously renewing their Covenant with God ; to rush immediately and carelessly into Worldly Affairs, is the way to have their Hearts presently grow Cold, and Chill, and Dead. 'Tis true we are oblig'd to mind our Callings ; and God hath appointed us six days for that purpose, having reserv'd a Seventh for himself ; on which we ordinarily receive the *Communion* ; and in which, if we have any true Concern for our *Souls*, we shall be careful, as he requires us, to banish all Worldly Thoughts and Affairs out of our Minds and Hearts : But that of which I would have you be careful, is that you rush not into the world after a Sacrament

ment, without taking a Preservative along with you. You cannot, if you consult past Experience, be insensible how apt the World is to withdraw you from God, and deaden you to Duty, and hinder you in the minding of those matters that are of infinitely greater importance:

To many a Breach of Sacramental Vows, hath your over great eagerness in the pursuit thereof it may be betray'd you. Think therefore after you have anew given your selves up to God, before you engage in your Temporal Affairs, that you are oblig'd to pursue and value and use the World like persons that are Devoted to the Most High God; that *you cannot serve him and Mammon together.*

That the Friendship of the World is enmity with God. That the fashion of this world passeth away. But that he to whom you

Mat. 6. 24.

Jam. 4. 4.

1 Cor. 7. 31.

are Consecrated hath much more valuable Treasures, and a more enduring substance in reserve for his faithful Servants. Some such Thoughts as these a little pursued, will help to season your Minds, and antidote you against the Infection, of which, in the midst of Worldly Affairs, you are in constant danger. They will be helpful in the midst of all the cares and concerns of which you are subordinately mindful, to keep your

your Hearts free for him, whose Servants you have vow'd to be.

6. **EXPECT** that the Devil will quickly endeavour to cause you to undo what you have done at a Sacrament, to hamper and embarrass you, to deaden and damp your Hearts, and cut the Sinews of holy Diligence ; and therefore prepare for his Assaults. Think not that he'll let you alone, and suffer you without molestation, to pay your Vows; don't imagine he'll give way, and yield, and suffer God's Right quietly to take place : Think not that any Resolutions of yours, tho' ever so serious, firm and strong, will carry you out of his reach : But rather expect the more heartily you renounc'd him, the more he'll rage against you : The more vigorously you resolv'd to oppose him, the more strenuously he'll set himself to baffle you. He'll start a thousand things in your way, to divert you ; if that wont do, he'll terrifie and scare you, discourage and dishearten you ; if that won't do, he'll stir you up Opposition that you little thought of, and press you with difficulties from all Quarters. This is what you should before-hand expect and reckon upon ; that so you may be duly provided, and not surpriz'd. There are many honest Souls, that if they can but find themselves any thing serious
and

and warm in Renewing their Sacramental Vows, if they find any holy Fervours excited on that Occasion, are apt to think that now they are safe: The Devils wonted Method won't do with them, they are so well fix'd that he cann't hurt them, and thereupon they grow secure: And by this means he, before they are aware, gains upon them; they lose their ground; and he's too hard for them. Let's therefore beware of him; since *we are not ignorant of his Devices*. Let us ever expect the most vigorous Assaults of our Spiritual Adversary, when we have been most serious at a Sacrament, in Renewing our Vows of Fidelity, Vigour and Diligence, in our Holy Warfare: And let us prepare our selves to resist at first, which would do much towards the strengthening of our own footing, and the securing the Payment of our Vows: But if we let him gain the least Advantage, we shall find it very difficult to recover it again.

7. OFTEN pray over your own Vows, and seriously and fervently look upwards, for those Aids and Succours, without which there's no ground for us to hope to pay them. We read of our Blessed Saviour, That *in the Days of his* Heb. 5. 7.
Flesh, he offer'd up Prayers and Supplications with strong Crying and Tears. In this, we should be like him, if ever we would be

Q

true

to our trust, as he was. The most praying Christian is ordinarily likely to be the most improving, thriving, diligent Christian. You made not your Vows in your own strength ; but to him to whom your Vows were made, must you be beholden for strength to keep them. The first time therefore you retire after the Renewing them at a Sacrament, bend your Knees to the Father of Mercies, and God of all Grace; and earnestly beg of him Wisdom and Strength to fulfil your Engagements. Nay, be not more frequent in begging of him *your daily Bread*, than in sending up this request, That he would not *lead you into Temptation* ; i. e. that he would not suffer you to be overcome by it. Beg earnestly of him, that he would lead your Hearts into his Love, and constantly keep you under the governing Influences thereof; and so order your steps, as that you may faithfully keep his Commandments. Beg of him that he would rouse you, when slumbering ; spur you, when loitering ; reduce you, when wandering ; uphold you, when sinking ; cheer you, when drooping ; and so guide, assist, and succour you, as that in the midst of all the Infirmities and Imperfections whereto you are liable, and and with which you will be always chargeable, you yet may be able to approve your selves to him as sincerely faithful-

faithful. Prayer must be always the great Engine of our help and strength. If we are beset, and find our selves unable to withstand the vigour wherewith we are attack'd, we should take Wing upwards, and beg Grace to help in the time of our need. If we are mastered, we should look upwards for strength, whereby we may be recover'd, and brought to our selves again. Prayer will be needful and useful, from first to last. Where Sacramental Vows are not attended with fervent Prayers, 'tis not at all to be wondered at, if they are soon broken. For it is an Argument of too much dependance on our own strength, which in reality is but weakness; and too little dependence on him without whom we can do nothing. 'Tis a Mercy, in such a Case, for God to suffer us to fall, that we may be the more fully convinc'd how helpless we are without him. If therefore we would ever come in any measure to answer and pay our Sacramental Vows, we should follow them with serious and earnest Prayers: And yet we must not rest there neither, but we must follow our Prayers with our Endeavours. And therefore,

8. KEEP up a strict Watchfulness over your selves in all things; we should set a Watch over our Eyes, Ears, Tongues, Appetites, Hearts and Hands, that they betray

us not into a Miscarriage. And there especially should we be most careful, and make our guard the strongest, where we have formerly tripped most frequently. If we are not very careful afterwards, we shall shew that our Vows were not made in earnest. We must *Watch*, as well as *Pray*, *that we enter not into Temptation*. We should observe the first stirrings of Corruption, and endeavour to quell them; and labour to curb Sin in its first beginnings, before it have gone too far, and gain'd too much upon us. We should maintain a constant Jealousie of our own treacherous Hearts. We should watch against even the appearance of Evil; and never intermit our guard, as we would not have our *Hearts hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin*, and as we would not lose the sense of our Sacred Engagements, which is better kept from the first, by the constant maintaining some degrees of an holy warmth within, than it is afterwards recover'd, when it hath been lost, and the Heart hath been damp't, and chill'd, and cool'd.

Heb. 3. 13.

9. OFTEN call your selves to an Account what Influence the Vows of God have upon you; how well you answer and pay them. Let not things run on, time after time, without Examining; which is the high-way to danger, and
loss,

loss, and disorders of all kinds: But often pause, and betlink your selves how matters stand. Go out upon the Enquiry, Whether or no you retain any suitable sense of your Solemn Engagements; whether your Hearts and Lives are under the force of them, yea, or not? Keep Court in your own Breasts, and bring your selves to the Test, that you may see how well you have kept or lost your ground. A Tradesman many times hardly knows how it stands with him, as to his Estate, till he comes to cast up his Accounts: No more can you without Self-Examination, so well judge how *your Vows* have been kept or broken. Were it frequent, provided it were serious, 'twould be very beneficial; for it would help to keep Conscience tender, by causing it to smite us upon the least omission or transgression; it would help to keep our Minds in awe, and be a Curb to that *Levity* whereinto we are so *very prone* to slide; it would be a sort of an Anticipation of the future *Day of Account*, when all things shall be strictly examin'd and enquir'd into; and be a constant Spur to Watchfulness and Care. Let us often therefore in our Retirements, seriously and strictly examine our Hearts and our Ways, if we would live up to the Vows of God that we are under: And when

we have done what we can of this kind, let's beg of God to supply our Defects; and make use of the pious strain of David, *Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Pf. 139. 23,
24.

10thly and Lastly, WHENEVER you find your selves sliding or already slid into Deadness and Remissness, earnestly plead the cause of God with your own Hearts, and do what you can to chide them out of their perfidious Inclination. Urge Sacramental Transactions upon your Hearts, to quicken your Faith and Love and Obedience. God hath given us (that is our Mental Powers) a considerable Authority over our selves; which if ever, is certainly to be us'd in this Case. In nothing would *Self Excitation* and *Self Obligation* be more beneficial than in this matter. Reason the case therefore soberly and yet Authoritatively with your selves, whenever you find the sense of Sacramental Vows diminishing, abating, or wearing off: Argue with your selves at some such rate as this. Is this like a Christian? Is this the way to show the Resentments I have of my Redeemers amazing Love? Is this the way to grow and thrive in Grace and Piety? Or is it not rather the way to decline and go backward? Is this the way to secure the

Di-

Divine favour? Or is it not rather the way to incur Gods Displeasure? Shall I not by this means dishonour God, lose my own Peace, and deaden others? Shall I not baffle my own Hopes, and blur my Evidences, and grieve the Spirit, and wretchedly indispose my self for Renew'd engagements, to which I am frequently call'd, by my Deadness, Carelessness and Sloth? What ails thee then O my Soul? Why art thou so stupid and senseless? Why so Base, Unworthy and False? What can ever hold thee fast to thy God and Saviour, if not such bonds as thou art under? What can engage thee to thy Duty, if not such Solemn Vows and Promises as thou hast often made? How ungovernable dost thou show thy self, that such Sacred Transactions as are manag'd at every Sacrament, do no more affect and awe thee? For shame stir up thy self. If ever thou wert really Serious and in Earnest, now show it: If thou hast any thing of sincerity in thee make it appear by thy care to pay thy Vows.

THIS is a sort of work we find Holy David frequently engag'd in. He once found himself very despondent: But how doth he chide himself? *Why art thou cast down O my Soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?* Psalm 42. *vers. 5.* and he's at it again *vers. 11.* He endeavour'd to reason him-

self out of his discomposure and disorder, and the like he did at other times: So should we in this case; Why art thou so Treacherous O my Soul? And why so false to thy God and Saviour? May he not justly resent it? And may'st thou not reasonably expect to smart for it? And such sort of Reasonings as these we should dilligently pursue, and not give over till our Hearts are warm'd. If we would often trye it, we should find nothing more effectual than this, to keep our Hearts under a serious sense of Sacramental Vows.

BUT after all, when we have taken the greatest Care, and us'd our utmost dilligence, we shall find the Apostles observation true, *That in many things we offend all*. We shall find Sin will stick so close, as that we cannot shake it off in our present infirm and crazy state. When we fall into Sin therefore let's not lie in it, but let us speedily rise again by Repentance, and renew our Resolutions of Obedience; begging both Strength and Succours from on high. And let us from the sense of our manifold present imperfections, be mov'd earnestly to long for that time and state, when we shall need no Ties and Bonds, no Vows and Promises, to fasten us to our God, and engage us to our Duty: But we shall be inseparably

rably united to him, and admitted to the Blissful Fruition of his immediate presence, and have no more failures and breaches, no more sins and falls to trouble and disturb us, but shall be advanc'd to unalterable Perfection, receiving to all Eternity additional encreases, proportionably as our growing Capacities can bear them.

AND the good Lord grant that we may so faithfully pay the Vows which we are now ever and anon repeating, as that we may at present receive all the Blessings he hath promis'd to sincere Souls, and be accepted, owned, and approved by him at the great day of Account at last.

CHAP. XIV.

Sundry Serious Considerations, to enforce the sense of our Vows upon us, and engage us to pay them.

BEING thus far engag'd, I would not methinks desist without leaving some Impressions on the Hearts of my Readers, the good effects whereof may be discernable; I shall therefore do my utmost by arguing with them, and pressing them with the most strong and urgent Considerations I could think of, to engage them

them to live up to their Sacred Vows, and to do it with greater Care and Industry, with greater Zeal and Fervency than ever heretofore. And here I have two sorts of Persons to deal with.

1. THOSE who have no care at all in earnest about this matter.

2. SUCH as are seriously thoughtful about it, and do set themselves to keep and pay their Vows, but often fall short, which is their Grief and Trouble. These are Cases vastly different ; and the Persons concern'd are to be very differently dealt with. To distinguish between the one sort and the other is out of my Power ; but 'twill be no difficult matter for any Persons who will employ their Consciences in a diligent and impartial Search and Examination, to find out to which Class they belong.

AS for you then who have the Vows of God indeed upon you, but you mind them not ; who repeat them time after time, but are as far from setting yourselves to pay them as ever ; I mean not in *Perfection*, but in any measure of *Sincerity* ; who run on in a careless, carnal, wicked Course and State, without any considerable effectual Stop or Check, notwithstanding all your Sacramental Promises and Engagements ; I would make the following Demands of you, which I would

would desire you closely to pursue when alone, begging of God that he would bless the Thoughts which they will lead you to, and make them effectual to rouse and awaken you.

1. WHAT would you think of any that should go to deal with you, as you deal with the Blessed God? Suppose any Persons that had offended and injur'd you, should come time after time, and with a seeming Concern and Sorrow for what is past earnestly desire to be at Peace with you, and with all possible Solemnity promise to lay aside all Enmity against you, and engage to be your hearty Friends; to study your Interest; to respect and honour you, to gratify and please you, and in all respects make your Concerns their own: and never afterwards mind what they have said or done, but the more securely pursue their wonted Enmity under the Covert of a pretended Friendship? Or suppose any with whom you had been at variance, should come to Articles of Agreement with you, to which all possible external Marks of an hearty Consent should be given; which Articles for further Security should be once and again, as often as was desir'd, publickly ratify'd by being sign'd and seal'd before sufficient Witnesses; and yet they continue to act as when at open

Variance, without any regard to such Articles and Agreements : Or suppose a Servant of yours that had been dishonest, careless, and slothful, pretending to beg pardon for what is past, should again and again promise by all that's sacred to be diligent, honest and faithful, but never mind such Promises after they were made, but remain as bad if not worse than ever : What Thoughts would you have of Persons by whom you should be thus dealt with ? Could you have any regard to them ? Would you care to have any more to do with them ? Could you mind any thing that came from them ? Could you have any Patience with them ? I believe not : And yet this is the rate of your dealing with the Blessed God. Consider what you'd think of such Persons as these, and that will help you to judge what the Great God may think of such as you.

2. **WHAT** can you suppose could ever bind you to God, or effectually engage you to your Duty, if such Vows, and Ties, and Bonds as you are under won't do it ? You cannot certainly but have some Sense that the Blessed God must be the Author of your Happiness, if ever you reach it ; and that in his Favour lies your Life ; and that without his Help you are lost and ruin'd. Your
very

very Coming to the Lord's Table speaks this, if it speaks any thing. Why come you there if this be not the Sense of your Souls? If it be, why don't you take the Course whereto you are bound by so many seemingly solemn Vows and Promises, whereby alone you can get and keep his Favour? If the intrinsick Excellency of the several Duties of Religion, the Pleasure that attends Obedience, and the Rewards that would follow upon it, have no attractive Influence upon you; if the Fear of what your Disobedience would have consequent upon it, would not suffice to move you; if the happy or doleful Issue of an holy or a wicked Life respectively, which you may evidently discern in many Examples that are frequently before your Eyes, were not effectual with you; yet methinks your own voluntary, solemn, frequently repeated Vows, Oaths, and Promises, might prevail for a religious Life. If it be not the best Course you can take, why do you vow you'll lead it? If it be, why then are you so much worse than your Word? Methinks if ever you are serious, it should be at a Sacrament: If any thing could hold you fast, it should be your own Engagements. In civil Affairs, where an Oath hath lost its awe, there's no hold; there's no Band of Society

ciety with such Persons: so what hold can God have of us, what Band of Society can there be between him and us, if Vows have no Force; if we make them and break them, without Care or Concern? Where Perjury prevails, common Honesty's banish'd: and where Sacramental Vows are not minded but slighted, and allowedly and unconcernedly broken, Religion dies; it can have no Force; it can't come to any thing.

3. CAN you imagine your frequent repeating your Vows, at all diminishes your sin or lessens your guilt? Or rather doth it not wotully add to, and enhance it? Would it at all extenuate a Rebels crime, for him to be ever now and then throwing himself at his Princes feet, promising to give undoubted evidences of an unblemisht Loyalty for time to come; who no sooner departed than he renew'd and still persisted in his Rebellion? Would any one think it lessned the faults of a Child, to come to his Parents, and own them, and beg Pardon, and that again and again, promising amendment; and yet after all continue irreclaimable, and wilfully persist in his Disobedience? If not, as in both cases 'tis evident it would not, How can you then perswade your selves, That Renew'd Sacramental Vows, make the allow'd wickedness of your
Lives

Lives the less heinous? That Repeated Engagements to be the Lords, make your wilful breaches of them the less dangerous? No; so far is that from being true, that both guilt and danger is thereby increased: Had you not better make no Vows at all, than wilfully and allowedly break them? In the former case, you'd but be chargeable with a Neglect; but the latter implies the most audacious Contempt. 'Tis true a neglect may be so circumstantiated as to be contemptuous; and so may become near upon (if not to the full) as heinous as a Profanation. We may therefore take this as a general Rule; that *a fear of Profanation will never excuse a contemptuous Neglect; nor will a fear of Neglect in the least excuse a Profanation.* Say not therefore that 'tis your Duty to come to the Lord's Table, and so think at all to excuse yourselves that way, by pleading that you discharge your Duty: For tho it be the Duty of all who profess to be Christians to come to the Lord's Table, and there seriously make Vows of an Holy and a Christian Life; yet do those very Vows aggravate the Guilt of those Persons who mind them not afterwards; and on whom they have no Force to disengage them from the Wickedness renounc'd, and engage them to the Holiness promis'd:

mis'd: as in the foremention'd case, tho' it be the Duty of a Rebel to submit to his Prince, and promise Obedience; yet if after pretending to do so he persists in Rebellion, his Crime is doubled.

4. DOTH not God, think you, take notice of your wretched trifling with him? Men are easily impos'd on; a shadow of Devotion may pass with them for the reality: They may reckon slight Vows serious; and thro' unacquaintedness with Persons state, may charitably esteem such things as in reality are gross and wilful, and allow'd Breaches, proceeding from an unchang'd Heart, to be such Slips as are consistent with Sincerity: But is the great God also, think you, thus to be deceiv'd? Can the Searcher of Hearts be ignorant with how little seriousness *you make your Sacramental Vows*, and how little you mind them afterwards? Can *you* ever think to hide from him, who is privy to all *your Ways*, the Deceitfulness of *your Dealing* with him? And do you think he can observe you running a Round of careless making, and wilful breaking of *seemingly* Solemn Vows and Promises, and not resent it? Because *you*, it may be, forget how often *you* renew *your* Vows at the Lords Table, and how often *you* wickedly break them, do you think the great God doth the like? No, no, assure your selves,

selfes, he remembers, notes and records ; and he'll make even *your* own Consciences another Day, to serve as Memorials both to himself and *you* : For your Conviction and Condemnation ; and for his Justification, and your own inexpressible Terror.

5. WHAT Treatment can *you* expect from *Him*, with whom *you* deal so perfidiously ? Do *you* think he'll easily overlook, or slightly animadvert on such Despisers and Contemnners of all that's Sacred, as *you*, that run on in a course of wilful breaking *Sacramental Vows* and *Promises*, shew *your* selves to be ? Doth not *your* aggravated Guilt cry aloud for Vengeance ? And what can be too severe for *you* ? May *you* not justly expect, that a Train of Temporal Judgments should follow *you* ? On what account, I pray, was it, that the Apostle tells the *Corinthians*, That *many were sick and weak among them, and many slept* ? Was it not because they came to the Lord's Table, and did not discern the Lord's Body ? And if the truly Upright and Sincere, may thro' their Irreverence and Unpreparedness, expose themselves to such Temporal Judgments as those (as the Apostle there seems to intimate) how much more doth *your* far greater guilt, which shews it self in an habitual Profanation of the most sa-

R

cred

cred of Divine Institutions, and allow'd Breaches of the most solemn *Sacramental Promises*, expose *you* to the same and greater Judgments, even in this Life? And how justly may they be follow'd with an Eternal Vengeance? And how certainly will they be so, without a speedy and sorrowful Repentance? Let me then further ask *you*,

6. DO *you* never think of a Day of Reckoning that's coming? Have *you* not sometimes in your Retirements some pre-apprehensions of a sad Account that *you* have to give to God another Day? Doth Conscience never read *you your* Doom, summoning *you*, as 'twere, before hand, to the Bar of God? Do *you* never think of the Day that's near, and not far off, when all things will be narrowly scann'd; the Books open'd; and among other things *your* Sacramental Bonds put in suit against *you*? I believe *you* could hardly be so stupid in *your* worldly Concerns, but that if *you* knew *you* ow'd ten times as much as *you* could pay, and were in constant danger of being fallen upon by *your* Creditors, and arrested, and perpetually imprisoned; *you'd* be in constant fear; *you'd* be so taken up with the thoughts of *your* unhappy state, and what's coming upon *you*, that *you'd* be able to mind nothing: And what? Do the Affairs of time, in
your

your esteem, so much exceed those of Eternity, that *you*, that would be so much concern'd in the former Case, can remain unmov'd, when *you* know that you are perfect Bankrupts in Spirituals, and in constant danger of being arrested by God, for ten thousand Talents, no one of which you can ever be able either to pay, or to get discounted? Can *you* be unconcern'd, when *you* know, that within a little time *you* must be summon'd to the Bar of a Righteous God, where your very Sacramental Bonds put in suit against you, would utterly confound and over-whelm you, were all other Debts over-look'd and forgiven? Whence is it that in this case *you* are so undisturb'd? Do but set your selves down, and sedately reckon up your Sacramental Bonds, and see what they amount to : O what a vast sum comes up! Doth it not-then deserve many serious thoughts how this sum shall be discharg'd? And what, will *you* never begin? Will you go on to add Bond upon Bond, and heap *Vows* upon *Vows*, and never in earnest begin to pay? I beseech *you* remember and consider, that all the Sacraments you have profan'd, and all the *Vows* you have made at them, which *you* afterwards wilfully, habitually, and wickedly broke, will rise up in Judgment against *you* at last, and eternally condemn

R 2

you.

you. Let me then further ask you,

7. WHAT can you plead in your own Excuse? That *you* run on wilfully breaking Sacramental *Vows*; that's your *Charge*. Produce your Pleas, and you'll see as weak a Creature as I can shew you their Insufficiency. It may be *you'll* plead *your* proneness to sin; Alas! that's *your* fault, but no Excuse: 'Tis what you have cherish'd and delighted in; therefore to be sure it diminishes not your guilt. It may be *you'll* plead the force of Temptation; but how can that excuse *you*, who don't watch, and pray, and strive against it? It may be *you'll* plead that the Best have Frailties; and live not up to their *Sacramental Vows*, as they should: But what Excuse can this help such as *you* to, who han't a dram of sincerity? Which appears, in that *you* have us'd no serious thoughtfulness, diligence, pains or care at all in this matter; which are known Evidences of the Sincerity of the Upright? It may be *you'll* plead a want of sufficient Grace; and so endeavour to throw the blame on God: But that's a vain Attempt; he never expects to reap where he hath not sown, or gather where he hath not strawn; but will be satisfied with that which bears proportion to what he gives. And can you pretend that you have rightly us'd the Grace that hath been afforded you?
And

And might you not have had more, had that but been duly improved? The Case will therefore allow of no Excuse: the Guilt of such Persons can by no Considerations be either extenuated or diminished.

I now proceed to the other sort of Persons that are to be dealt with, *viz.* such as are indeed thoughtful about their Sacramental Vows, and do sincerely set themselves to answer and pay them, who yet do often fail and falter, which is the Matter of their Grief and Trouble. I would not willingly do any thing to the needless sadning of any upright Soul, and should therefore be sorry that any such should receive Disturbance from any thing mention'd under the former Heads, which are calculated for those of another stamp; and need not give those who are sincere, tho imperfect, any Molestation: I have other Considerations to suggest to such which have their weight, but are of another nature. I have the following Questions to put to them, which I would beg of them seriously and impartially to weigh.

1. MIGHT not any, even the best of you, take much more care to live up to your Sacramental Vows than you do? You can't be more free to plead, than I to own, that all your Care could not

R 3

keep

keep you from all Sin: For when all's done, *there's no Man that liveth and sinneth not.* But might you not do much more towards the avoiding of Sin; might you not avoid much more Sin than you ordinarily do? I appeal to your Consciences about this Matter. Should not the Sense of the Deceitfulness of your Hearts, your many former Falls and Smarts for them, and Sufferings by them; and of the too great Strength of the fleshly part in you, keep you more in awe, and make you more careful? and might you not be much more diligent, and watchful, and circumspect, and provident, and serious, than you are? Don't you find a great and very remarkable Difference in your selves, in your Tempers and your Lives, when your Guard is strict, your Eyes about you, your Prayers frequent, close and fervent, and your Intercourse with Heaven uninterrupted; from what you are when your Guard is intermitted, your Spirits are clogg'd, your Prayers are heavy; and the Reins are out of your Hands? Whence comes the Difference that is so discernible even among real Christians, who all are sincere? How even, uniform, steady, vigorous, holy, and heavenly shall some be over others? To the Eye there is not a greater Difference between some Saints and some Sinners,

ners, than there is between some Saints and others ; nor indeed so great. Whence comes this ? What can it be imputed to, but the different degrees of Resolution, Watchfulness, Care, Caution, Diligence, and Painfulness, that several Persons reach to. It would be no objection against this ; for any to say, That all this difference is owing to the Grace of God, and that alone, which is imparted by God to every man severally as he will : For its freely granted ; and these things mention'd that are instrumental in this difference, are only so many parts of that Grace of God which receives different names according to the diversity of objects about which 'tis employ'd : So many parts (I say) of that Grace which God is pleas'd freely to impart : But let it withal be noted, that 'tis not meerly Arbitrarily that 'tis imparted, but by Rule ; by that most wise and equitable Rule, *That to every one that hath shall be* Mat. 24. *given, and he shall have abundance.* Every 29. one that *hath* ; i. e. hath improv'd former Vouchsafements. How comes it then that you let so many out strip you ? If you look about you you'll find this and that, and the other Person, that walks more closely with God, and lives more up to their Sacramental Engagements than you do. You are always almost stumbling ;

R 4

they

they, compar'd with you, go on as 'twere evenly : Were you as Humble, Watchful, Diligent, and Industrious as they, you might keep pace with them : And might you not be so if you would ? What I pray hinders you ? It may be you'll say, you can't be so of your selves : True, but the God *you* serve, will be as free to you as to them, if you carry it to him as they do. And as for them who so much outstrip you, they might be yet much better than they are, they might walk much more closely with God, better pay their Vows, and live yet more agreeably to their Christian Engagements than they do : If this were not possible then must they be suppos'd to be arriv'd at Perfection, which for any to pretend to in this Life, is the height of Folly. But I suppose there are none really think but that they might be better and do better, and live better, and answer their Sacramental Vows better, if they were more careful. And should not this thought shame *you* ? To think, that *you* who have given *your* selves up to God, and so firmly resolv'd for God, and so frequently declare *you* stand to *your* Resolution, should for want of care, so often, and so shamefully fail in *your* Duty, and break *your* Vows at the rate *you* do ? Let me ask *you*,

2. WHAT are those things which di-

vert

vert *you* from that care and application, which a matter of so vast importance as this is, plainly requires? Are they things of greater weight and moment, and that more nearly concern *you*? Are they things *your* concern about which will turn to better account than *your* care in this matter? Surely no: Generally *they* are the affairs of the World, matters of Profit or Interest, Common Civil Affairs; *they* might and should be minded in their place, but need not jumble out things of much greater weight. But what comfort can *you* ever expect in any thing, the pursuit of which hindred *your* carefulness to keep *your* Sacramental Vows? How can *you* expect a Blessing on those Affairs of *yours*, by which *you* are diverted from what ought to be *your* principal care; viz. The Living up to *your* Christian Vows? If *you*'ll weigh things in an even ballance, *you*'ll soon see which side preponderates. And will *you* be so foolish as by things comparatively inconsiderable, to be diverted from, and deadned in, that which you have often vow'd and engag'd should be the business of *your* Lives, and which well deserves to be so? Again,

3. Is not God more dishonour'd by *your* failures and neglects, than any others whatsoever? Doth not *your* Relation to God, and interest in him, make

your

your Breaches the more Provoking? *You* are His Covenant People; His Children; His Domesticks; *you* belong to his Family; He treats *you* as Friends and Intimates if *you* after all thro' Carelessness do break *your* Vows, and deal Treacherously may he not *justly highly* Resent it? Is not Gods Honour much in *your* hands? Will not *your* Failures and Neglects tho' *they* are such as are consistent with *Sincerity*; *your* falling so sadly short of *your* Sacramental Vows in many cases occasion disparaging Reflections upon Religion, deaden others, encourage them in their Remissness, and cause the World to say, that after all there's little real difference between the Godly and the Wicked? And if *you* have any concern for the Divine Honour must not this needs affect *you*.

4. May not God altho' he eventually and finally pardon and forgive *you*, yet at present justly frown upon *you*, to punish *you* for *your* Carelessness and Folly? May he not justly cause you to walk mournfully and heavily, who often walk so carelessly and remissly? Must be nibbling at the bait till you are caught with the hook; and are for ventring as far as *you* may with any safety, till *you* run too far to make a safe retreat? May he not justly suffer the Devil to take the advantage

tage against *you* which *you* give him by *your* Breaches of *your* Sacramental Vows? And hide his face from *you* to convince *you* of the disingenuity of *your* dealings with him; and show *you* how he's displeased therewith? What if he makes *you* smart by those very Corruptions, *your* indulging which, occasion'd *your* Renew'd Breaches? Must *you* not blame *your* selves, and justify him? Again,

5. MAY not *your* frequent Breaches of *your* Sacramental Engagements, much blur the evidences of *your* sincerity? time was it may be, when upon a serious examination of *your* Heart and survey of *your* Life, *you* found comfortable ground to hope that *you* were a Child of God, had a special interest in him, and were well fixt for Heaven; but now make the same enquiry, and alas *you* find the matter dubious: Your ground of hope is exceedingly diminish'd; *you* know not whether that which appears like Grace in *you* be true and genuine, or not; and therefore are full of Fears: Upon what can *you* charge this difference? Is not *your* Carelessness and Remissness in keeping and living up to *your* Sacramental Vows, as likely and probable a Cause of it as any thing whatsoever? May not that which betrays the great Prevalence of Corruption in *you*, often make *your* In-

Integrity dubious? And will you not then endeavour to take up? Will you persist in a Course, which continued, may make your Uprightness, and the Truth of your Grace, and Sincerity of your Piety, a thing always questionable; and so perpetually fill you with Doubts and Fears. Again,

6. ARE not the Eyes of him to whom your Vows are made always upon you? Doth not he search and try you, eye and view you? and will you be careless and remiss even while he looks on? Doth not he see your Warmth and Seriousness at a Sacrament? and doth not he afterwards see how soon you grow cold, and dead, and dull again; returning to former Remissness? and how little you are influenc'd by renewed and repeated Vows? and shall not the Thought of his Inspection awe and affect you? Again,

7. WON'T your Experience teach you? Have you not felt the good Effects of Care and Watchfulness after a Sacrament, that you might answer and pay the Vows you renew'd there; and the sad Effects of Negligence and Remissness, many and many a time heretofore? and will you never learn to keep close to God? Have you not smarted for past Faults, and will you run into the same again? Will you leave the same Gaps open

open by which Dulness and Formality formerly crept in upon you? Will you let the same Temptations draw you into Sin, and the same Corruptions prevail upon you, and the same Toys and Trifles divert you from your Duty as heretofore? What would this be but to do that in Spirituals, which you would blame as unaccountable and amazing Folly in common and civil Affairs? And then,

8. and Lastly; WHEN do you expect to arrive at a confirmed State? How can you think to grow in Grace, and to thrive and improve in the Ways of God, if you are not more careful and faithful in keeping and paying Sacramental Vows? Can you be satisfied with the lowest degree of Grace that's saving, and that's capable of helping you to Heaven? If so, that alone might justly make the Truth of your Grace questionable: but if you desire to improve in Grace, and that to such a degree as that you may *have an abundant Entrance ministred to you into God's Heavenly Kingdom*, as 'tis natural for all those who have the Truth of Grace to do; methinks you should not be your own Hindrance by your Carelessness, about your Sacramental Vows; which the more faithfully you keep, the more may you hope to do so; and the less careful you are about them, the less Hope is there in the case. CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

The Temper and Carriage of a Soul that's rightly sensible of the Force and Sacredness of Sacramental Vows, briefly EXEMPLIFY'D.

HAVING thus far endeavour'd to open, illustrate, and enforce Sacramental Vows; and done what in me lies to help my Readers to understand them rightly, and to engage them to repeat them seriously, and keep them faithfully, I shall close with a brief but distinct View of the Temper and Carriage which was the Scope of this present Endeavour. I'll draw a Model, and that as exactly and faithfully as I am able in a short Compass, from whence all may discern what they should be, and how they should carry it, in order to the approving themselves sincere, and reaping the Benefit of their frequent Sacramental Federal Transactions. In doing which I'll avoid running things to such an height as ordinary Persons are incapable of arriving at, or as few attain to; which might prove a Discouragement instead of an Assistance: and shall instance in the common pitch of upright and

and sincere Souls, that are rightly sensible of the Vows of God which they are under.

SUCH Persons may be consider'd in several *Instances* : and I shall select those that are most remarkable ; and in each show the Temper, and Posture, and Resentments of a sincere Soul ; how its Pulse beats ; what are its usual Affections and Motions, and most natural Stirrings.

SUCH a Soul may be consider'd either as preparing it self for the renewing sacred Vows ; or in the Act of renewing them ; or after it is finish'd, and the Bonds are renew'd : and so, either as immediately retiring ; or in the after Life. A sincere Soul immediately after the renewing Sacramental Vows may be consider'd either as recollecting what's past, or as praying for Grace and Strength ; or as charging it self to be faithful : And then again in the After-Life, it may be consider'd either as first setting out ; or as meeting with Temptations and Struggling with them ; or as stumbling and falling, and so exhortulating and chiding ; or as rising again by Repentance and renewing its Resolutions ; or as bemoaning its Unhappiness by reason of its Imperfections ; or as longing for that State where it shall ever keep close to its God
and

and Saviour, without any Failures and Breaches. Many more Periods or Postures might be mention'd and considered, but these are the most signal and the most common: and they who can as I go along from point to point find their Temper and Carriage correspondent to the Model propos'd; they who arrive but at the pitch here exemplify'd, need not question their Sincerity, or doubt of Divine Acceptance.

1. THEN, let's begin with viewing a sincere Soul, *preparing* it self for the renewing sacred Vows to be the Lord's at the Holy Communion: and we shall find it seasonably retiring from the World, and disingaging it self from sensual Intanglements, that it may be free without Clog and Incumbrance, for transacting with its God and Saviour about Matters of the vastest Consequence and Importance; studiously ridding it self of worldly Thoughts and Cares that would fasten it down to this Earth, when it ought with the greatest Ardour to be aspiring Heaven-ward. Follow it into its Retirements and you'll find it mighty busy in examining and enquiring into its past Carriage and present State; narrowly searching all the Corners of the Heart, and bringing the Actions of the Life to the Scrutiny, that no considerable

que Failures, Neglects, or Disorders, may be unobserv'd. It attempts not to cover or extenuate discover'd Faults or Breaches, but aggravates them to the height in order to the greater Self-abasement. It falls therefore to grieving, blushing, and self-condemning; it throws it self at God's Feet, owning an entire Forfeiture of all Covenant Blessings, by its Negligence, Carnality, Sloth and Folly; and breathes out its penitent Remorse in unaffected strains of Devotion: After which it stirs up it self to transact a-new with God, with the utmost Seriousness; endeavouring to renew its Sense of his just Right and manifold Claims. It cheers it self by the Consideration of the known and experienc'd Clemency and Pity of the God with whom it hath to do; and fires it self by devout Meditations on its Redeemer's matchless Love, and earnestly begs to feel more and more the constraining Power of it. It takes all possible care to get its Wedding-garment on, that so it may become a welcome Guest at the sacred Festival on that Peace-Offering, which is the only Cement between it and its God. It sets it self to burnish up its Graces, that they may all be in readiness to act their part. It pants, it thirsts, it longs for Christ; it endeavours to enlarge its Desires; and
S to

to open wide the everlasting Doors, that the King of Glory may come in, and have a free Admission, and a fuller Possession, and a more absolute Dominion than ever; and strives with all its Might to excite in it self such a Sense of the Justness of its dear Saviour's Authority, as may make the Bonds it renews to him more strong, fixed and lasting; more powerful and prevalent than ever.

2. Let's view such a Soul in the Act of renewing Sacred Vows; and we shall see it humbling it self under a Sense of its great Treachery and Baseness, Fickleness and Inconstancy; asham'd to look upwards on the account of its Defilements and Disorders, heartily owning it self unworthy such an Honour as the being admitted into the Divine Service, admiring at God's great Benignity, that after all that's past there's room for Acceptance, and ground for Hope, adoring its Redeemer's unspeakable Condescension, and endeavouring to lose its self in the Wonders of his Love; recollecting all those Divine Excellencies which shone forth in the Course of his Life, throughout all his Sufferings, and at the Hour of his Death; and wistfully viewing him from first to last as an exact Mirror of Divinity, peculiarly fixing on his Death, when his Body was broken,
and

and his Blood pour'd forth ; being pierc'd with grief at the remembrance of those Sins which help'd to pierce his sacred Body ; and full of Astonishment, that it should be apt to have such light thoughts of that which was so full of Malignity, that it needed his precious Blood to make Atonement. It views the appointed Emblems, but it looks beyond them, and with sorrow considers the share it had in that doleful Tragedy which is thereby pointed at. It concernedly reflects on the need it stands in of a share, in the Benefit of that Sacrifice which they represent ; it rejoices in its own Capacity of being interested in it ; it takes the sacred Emblems, when offer'd, with a mixture of Joy and Sorrow, Fear and Love ; and embraces a crucified Saviour in the Arms of Faith, yielding up the Heart to him, as a part of the Victory and Conquest of his Love ; resigning up it self, and its all, entirely to his Disposal, Management, and Government ; not as a free Gift, but as his just Right, which to withhold from him, would be the highest Sacrilege ; and as an Offering infinitely beneath the desert of his Matchless Obligations. It contentedly quits all other things whatever, as but *Dung and Dross without a Christ* ; being perfectly asham'd to think that any Creature should be his Rival. It declares

it self satisfy'd with him as a Portion ; by reason that in him, and with him, it will have all that is needful ; and cares not what it wants, nor how it fares, nor what it parts with, so it may but share in his Merits, and his Spirit, his Grace, and his Glory. It not only throws it self into its Saviour's Arms for an instant, but with a design to abide there ; detesting whatever tends to with-draw it from him, with whom it is so enamour'd. It renounces Sin, Satan, and the World, as his known Enemies ; fetching strength from his Cross, to resist and oppose them. It disclaims Self, as an Usurping Tyrant, renouncing it so far as 'tis opposite, and firmly resolving to subject it, so far as 'tis capable, to his Scepter and Government. In humble Dependance on his promised Aids, it takes a New Oath of Fealty to him ; it engages to a thorow Discipleship ; solemnly swearing over his sacred Emblems, heartily to be subject to him, to study to resemble him, to carry it as one of his Followers, to stick to his Interest, to fight against his Enemies, to follow his Conduct, to submit to his Discipline, to be content with his Allotments, and patiently to wait for his Rewards. It embraces that Covenant which his Death so firmly ratify'd ; stands amaz'd at the inestimable Blessings made over in it ; and
firmly

firmly engages strenuously to apply it self to answer the Demands of it. And out of a sense of its own weakness, which time past hath but too much discover'd, it sends up the most Pathetical Supplications to its once crucify'd, but now glorify'd Redeemer, for fixing, stablishing, confirming, preserving, persevering Grace, and constant Supplies of it; that so the sense of such Obligations as he hath laid upon it, and such Bonds as it is voluntarily enter'd into to him, may by nothing ever be defac'd or worn out: In hope whereof it triumphs and rejoices; magnifying, adoring, blessing and praising all the three Persons in the sacred Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, on the Account of their distinct Concern and Agency, in the Redeeming and Saving of lost Sinners.

3. LET's view the same Soul immediately after the Renewal of such *Sacramental Vows*, and we shall find its first Work to be the Recollecting what past in the foregoing Transaction. *How aid I burn and glow (says such a Soul) when I found my self under the Direct Beams of my Saviour's Love at his Table! And what shall I do to retain my Warmth? Or, How little was I affected, suitably to such a Solemnity! And what can fire my frozen Heart? Such a Soul can't rest in the Work done; or*

think all's at an end, when the solemnity's over. It can't forbear either commending or chiding it self, according as the posture and carriage hath been ; it can't forbear endeavouring to drive things home. Follow it close, and you'll find it upon the first convenient Opportunity running all over again in its thoughts, and endeavouring to rivet good Impressions, and fix pious Resolutions, and establish and confirm holy Purposes, and back Renew'd Vows with strong enforcing Considerations ; and doing what it can to engage it self to answer it's Engagements and Obligations to its God and Saviour. *Shall I go and undo what I have been doing, by a lazy Indifferency, a negligent and careless course of Life ? Shall I forget whose I am, and who I am to serve, and what are my Engagements, and to whom and how I am bound ? Will not my Guilt be much encreas'd, my dear Saviour more offended, the blessed Spirit more griev'd, and my Heart more deaden'd than ever, if I return again to Folly ? Was not what I did in Renewing my Vows the Effect of Consideration ? Is not every thing that I have vow'd antecedently my Duty ? Hath not every part of my Duty Benefit attending it ? Is not He with whom I have been Transacting able to assist me ? And hath he not given me his Promise in his Word, and seal'd it at his Table ? He will never change or draw back :*

back : Why then should I? No, I have vow'd and I'll stand to it ; Christ is mine, and I'll be his: Him I'll love ; Him I'll serve, and follow. He shall have my Heart and my Life. And alas ! That little All I am able to give him, is not the thousandth part of what I owe Him. These, and such as these, are the Retir'd Thoughts and Reasonings of a sincere Soul, presently after Renewing Sacramental Vows.

4. THE former Exercise is no sooner over, but if *you'll* persist in *your* suit, *you'll* find the same Soul wrestling with God in Prayer, and sending its most earnest Petitions and Supplications upwards, for Grace and Strength to pay the Vows Renew'd. *I have vow'd indeed (O Lord) (says such a Soul to God) that I'll be thine ; I have anew Consecrated myself to my Blessed Redeemer, and I desire not to drawback : But I have of myself no strength to perform ; all my sufficiency is of thee : Lord, keep a sense of my Renew'd Engagements ever fresh and warm upon my heart. Thou know'st my Weakness and my Treachery : I beseech thee to aid me constantly by thy powerful Spirit, that how numerous soever my Infirmities and Imperfections be, I may in no case wickedly depart from thee. O that I who have been viewing a crucify'd Jesus, and engag'd to be his constant follower, might be crucify'd unto the World, and have that crucify'd unto me. O*

that I, who have been commemorating my de Lords Dying for Sin, may by vertue deriv'd from his Death, be enabled to die unto Sin daily : That I, who have vow'd to live to him in a course of holy Obedience, may have the Grace to be faithful ; that so he may own me at last for his, before his Father and all his holy Angels. These are much like the strains of a sincere Soul, after Renewed Vows at the holy Communion : But as for the Spirit that breathes in them at such a time ; the Fervour and Ardour wherewith they are vented, (which is that that is most considerable) it is out of my reach to describe it.

5. ONE can hardly suppose a Soul thus affected, to have long given over sending its Supplications upwards, before it will be apt to lay a strict Charge on its self, suitably to these premises. I have little reason (will such a Soul be apt to say to its self) to fear the want of aid from on high ; little reason to call my Dear Saviours readiness, to help me into question ; 'tis my self I have most cause to suspect, and my own Carelessness and Treachery that I have most cause to fear. I charge you therefore (says *Conscience*) in the name of God, to take care lest you break your Vows, and frustrate your Prayers, by your Negligence, Sloth and Remissness. Often therefore think to whom

whom you are devoted ; whose badge you wear ; how observant an Eye is always upon you ; how strict an account of your Carriage you must one day give to him to whom you have profest to give up your selves. Consider how much Religion will be disparag'd and discredited ; if you, that are under the strongest Ties that it is capable of bringing you under, to an unspotted Holiness of Life, have no discernable difference in your Carriage from the rest of the World, that pretend to no such strictness as *you* do. Think what advantage you give the Devil against your selves by your heedlessness, rashness and folly. Think what grief and sorrow you have pretended, your past breaches, and trifling so much with God occasion'd you ; and now take care, and stand on your guard. Where you are weakest, there let your Watch be the closest, and your Guard the strongest. Be not a stranger at home ; but often call thy self to an Account ; and whenever you do so, think what the matchless Love of your Redeemer requires at your hands, and how little you answer its Demands. Of this nature is *Conscience's* Charge ; which if seriously, solemnly, and authoritatively given, cannot but strike an Awe.

AND being come thus far, let's now take the other part of the Prospect, and consider

sider the *After Life*: The after state and carriage of one thus seriously renewing Sacramental Vows, and thus endeavouring to rivet the sense of them. We may view such a Person in six several Instants or Periods.

1. AS setting out and first attempting to answer Renew'd Vows and Engagements. To begin well is in many cases a great matter; tho' in others it signifies little because of the difficulty of persisting: However in this case it argues the sense of Sacramental Transactions to be very small and weak, if Persons set not out well; of this therefore those who are sincere, will be generally Careful. They'll look before them anew, and round about them; and consider their work and their way; their Friends and their Enemies; their Encouragements and their Difficulties; their Helps and their Hindrances; their Dangers, and their Remedies and Preservatives; and will endeavour to fortify themselves, and make provision accordingly. Such a Soul as hath been before describ'd, will therefore at first setting out summon all its powers to act their parts in the payment of its Vows; to stand on their guard for fear of a surprize: Will revive in it self the sense of its own weakness to prevent Security; will again call in aid from Heaven; will be jealous of every thing that

that is grateful to Flesh and Sense ; will take heed of running to the utmost bounds of what is lawful, whence its so easie to to step into excess ; will watch against first motions to Sin, and endeavour presently to eject them with abhorrence ; will often consider his Character, and what becomes it ; will prepare for opposition, and expect to be various ways assaulted ; will endeavour to keep himself open to the Spirits Influences, and to follow his Conduct ; will set himself to discharge his duty in every different Relation and Capacity wherein he may be consider'd ; will peculiarly guard against his own Iniquity, whereby he is most likely to be betray'd and baffled ; and endeavour to arm himself with an Holy Resolution and Undauntedness, without which nothing is to be done to purpose in the Christian Life.

2. THE next posture wherein you'll find him, will be assaulted by a variety of Temptations, with which he is struggling and grappling. He hath scarce begun in earnest to set himself to Answer his Vows, before the Devil attempts to divert, discourage, or hamper, him. The World presently steps in ; its Affairs are apt to hurry him, its cares to fill him ; and its disappointments to perplex him. The Flesh that rebels and is impatient of such close confinement as is laid

laid upon it ; and tumultuously rejects the yoke of Christ, as too severe and galling. The Mans *Dalilah* displays it self in all its charms again before him, to entice his Affections ; it discovers where his Strength lies, which is in his Union with his God, and by its wiles endeavours to rob him of it. A variety of Examples of those who call themselves Christians present themselves, who allow themselves in a greater Latitude than their Religion can warrant : Who being Dead, and Cold and Careless, Remiss and Formal, their Conversation is Infectious, and apt to cast a chilling damp. Thus is the Man on all hands beset ; both within and without. He can't be safe a minute if he intermits his guard. He must be continually struggling ; and that particularly with himself and his own heart, which will be apt to be deadned, when so many ways assaulted. For a while therefore (which is sometimes longer sometimes shorter) he however mostly keeps his ground: He spurs his backward Heart, and by frequent plying keeps it warm : And by often interspers'd Ejaculatory Addresses Heaven-wards, obtains many a kind lift from thence. He maintains his Resolution, Resists Temptations, keeps his heart for God ; and tho' with great difficulty, and much imperfection, he yet faithfully pays his Vows : But,

3. KEEP your Eye still fixt upon him, and in a little time you'll be likely to find him in another posture; you'll see him stumbling and falling through Temptations prevailing. Being so many ways assaulted, and somewhere or other unguarded, Sin creeps in upon him; the World entangles him, or the Flesh prevails over him; he breaks his Vows; he's again ensnar'd; his Redeemer is dishonour'd, his Conscience is wounded, his Peace is interrupted; he in part loses his hold; he's clogg'd and hamper'd; and the vivacity of his Spirit much abated. There's a great deal of difference in the temptations that prevail on such; in the degree of their prevalence, and the time of their continuance; which makes a great difference in the state of a Soul in such a case: But this is not to be sure, a state for such an one to continue in; he's uneasie under it; he often blames, and chides, and expostulates with himself; and looks upwards for help: And therefore you won't find him in this case long; but in a little time you may,

4. OBSERVE him rising again by Repentance, and Renewing his Resolutions of a Conscientious Fidelity. His Merciful Saviour pities him; and tho' he falls, yet raises him with his hand, and sets him on his Legs again, for which he thinks he can never be duly thankful:

And

2 Cor. 7.
11.

And then as the Apostle Paul observes in a particular Case, with reference to his *Corinthians* ; *What Careless it wrought in him ; yea, what Indignation ; yea, what fear ; yea, what vehement Desire ; yea, what Zeal ; yea, what Revenge !* Altho' he fell into the mire, yet he wallow'd not in it, he took no delight in it : And being recover'd, he doubles his Diligence, Watchfulness, and Care. With a Renew'd Vigour he resolves to pay his Vows ; the force whereof he owns, and his Breaches whereof he laments with unfeigned Sorrow. He repeats his Addresses to Heaven for fresh strength, which being afforded, he sets himself to his Duty, without satisfying himself with any Delays or Excuses.

5. ANOTHER Posture wherein you'll often find him, is bemoaning his unhappiness, by reason of his manifold imperfections. *O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death ?* Is his frequent complaint. Often will his Soul be sending forth its sorrowful moans in secret, on the account of his fickleness and instability ; his Hearts deceitfulness and treachery ; the power of Sin, and pravity of his Flesh ; and the weakness of his Grace, and his great proneness to be led aside from his God and Saviour ; notwithstanding the many strong Bonds he is under, and the many
power

powerful Motives and quickning Considerations he hath to engage him to keep close to him. Oh who hath so dead, and cold, and dull, and listless, and slippery an heart as I, will he often say? Certainly I am more senseless than any Man! Sure God hath few such careless Servants that are in any measure true to him: Christ hath few such followers, that are at all sincere: Sure it is not with others as it is with me! Oh the Levity and Blindness of my Mind! The Hardness and Stupidity of my Heart! The Carnality of my Affections! The Unevenness of my Temper! The many Irregularities of my Life! So many Vows not strong enough to hold me fast to my Saviour, and engage me to my Duty! O Unhappy Creature! to be so changeable, so unmanageable, so inconstant, so in love with vanity, so little enamour'd with thy Saviour, so soon to forget what he hath done for thee and to thee! which naturally leads

6. and lastly, TO a longing for that state where he will ever keep close to God, without any Failures or Breaches; which is another Posture wherein you'll often find him. O (will he often say) *that I had but the Wings of a Dove, that I might fly into the Celestial Regions, and be at rest. This that I now inhabit is, at best, a Region of Sorrow and Darknes, Sin and Misery.* Now

I often break with my Saviour, and lose the sight of him, and fall into sin, notwithstanding all my Resolutions against it. My present Vows I find at best too weak to hold me so close as I would be to my dearest Saviour : But had I once laid aside my Fleebly Vail, then I hope I should have another-guess sight of him than I can now attain unto : Which sight would kindle another sort of a Love to Him, than anything now can raise me to : Then I should see him as he is ; continually behold his Glory ; be over-power'd with his Love, and perpetually enjoy him, without any danger of stumbles or falls, without any mixtures of frowns, and without being ever parted from him. Lord, let me stay no longer in this distant imperfect state, than I may serve the Purposes of thy Glory ; smile on me, and assist me, in all my present Conflicts ; and when they are finish'd, take me unto thy self, into thy most desirable Everlasting Embraces.

AND now I'll leave it to any to judge, whether the state and temper before describ'd (Falls and Breaches only being bared, to which nevertheless the Best are incident) and the Spirit that runs thro' the several Periods and Postures mention'd, be not very desirable, very fitting, very lovely, very becoming, very pleasing to God, and comfortable to Persons themselves ; and therefore earnestly to be pray'd and labour'd for, and aspir'd after.

C H A P.

CHAP. XVI.

Of PARTICULAR VOWS. *How they must be limited that they may be warrantable: And how far, and in what Cases they may be dispens'd with.*

HAVING thus largely handled and improv'd the Sacred Vows which both the *Sacraments* of our Holy Religion naturally carry in them, (which was the main Intent and Aim of this Discourse) I shall now subjoin a brief Account of Vows made on Particular Occasions, and especially in an Hour of Distress, Trouble, or Danger; and make those Remarks on them, that may be most helpful to a plain, serious Christian, to enable him to discern his Duty, and put it in practice.

Particular Vows are those, whereby we seriously engage our selves to God, either to give or withhold, to do or forbear, any thing mention'd, for ends either directly specify'd, or plain to be understood. Concerning which, we may observe;

1. That the *Mosaick Law* allow'd them, and gave special Directions about them. The *Mosaical Oeconomy* had indeed something peculiar in it with reference to Vows; there was a Vow in use under it, that was in a special manner of Divine Ordination: That is, God himself appointed the Manner and Rites of it, leaving it free to any who were inclin'd and dispos'd, to bind themselves to it,

T

with.

without any force; and that was the Vow of the *Nazarites*: Which Vow of Nazaritism, was properly a Vow of Humiliation, that a Man would chastize himself, and deny himself in his ordinary delight of Liberty and Neatness; the Particular Rules and Laws of which Vow, may be seen at large, *Numb. 6*. And some of the Rules of it are easily intelligible; but others of them are very difficultly accounted for by us, as to their design: But besides this peculiar Institution, it was at that time lawful for either Men, or Women, (that were in their own Power, and not under Controul) by a Vow upon any particular Occasion, to consecrate to God what part of their Goods, or Possessions, or any thing wherein they had a Propriety, that they thought meet: Concerning which sort of Vows, we have this Law upon Record; *When thou shalt Vow a Vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee: and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to Vow, it shall be no sin in thee: That which is gone out of thy Lips, thou shalt keep and perform; even a free-will-Offering, according as thou hast vow'd unto the Lord thy God, which thou hast promised with thy Mouth.* Which Law is the more carefully to be observ'd, because it is of standing Obligation, and reaches even to

Deut. 23.
21, 22.

See the
Learned
Selden, de
Jure Na-
turali &
Gentium
pacta Dis-
ciplinam
Hebræorum
lib. 7. c. 2.

us. ACCORDINGLY 'twas usual among the Israelites by Vow to consecrate Victims out of their Flocks for Sacrifices to God, or other Gifts out of any part of their Possessions, for his Service in his Tabernacle or Temple. For we

we may observe, that tho' God allow'd the *Israelites* to dedicate what they pleas'd to Him by *Vow*, in token of the devout Disposition of their Minds; yet did he, as a Testimony of his Self-sufficiency, and to show that he needed nothing, appoint, that what was thus vow'd and consecrated, should either be sacrific'd, or else be set a part for the Use of his Priests and Ministers, or the necessary Occasions of his House. Of things thus vow'd, and devoted, some were allow'd to be redeem'd with a Price, and others not: Of which we have a particular Account, *Levit. 27. 27, &c.* which being a thing wherein we are little concern'd, I shall pass it over. But who ever is conversant in the History of the Old Testament, may observe sundry Instances of *Vows* made by Pious Persons upon Particular Occasions, which they afterwards punctually kept; as to which, they had no reason to question the Divine Approbation. But,

2. NEITHER doth the Gospel any where disallow of such *Vows*, nor can they (generally speaking) be made appear to be any way inconsistent with Christianity. 'Tis as lawful now as ever, for Persons to devote one or more of their Children to the Sacred Ministry, or any part of their Estate or Possession to the use of the Poor, or the support of the Gospel, and that by a *Vow*: Or by the same Sacred Bond to oblige themselves to an abstaining from what they find prejudicial, or to the doing of what they discern may, all things consider'd, tend to their furtherance in Piety and Holiness. Some I know there are, who apprehend

Vows to have been altogether peculiar to the Jewish Dispensation; but without any just Grounds. Were it so, they could certainly be able to make it appear either from Scripture or Reason; but they can do neither. Nothing out of Scripture can be alledg'd to prove it any ways unlawful for us under the Gospel, even in particular Cases, to bind our slippery Hearts; or fix the Proportion and Circumstances to our selves of a Duty which God hath requir'd in general, without determining either; to awe or to stint and limit our selves by means of a Vow; provided due Seriousness, Care, and Caution be not wanting. And as for Reason, I think that clearly determines, that *vows* that were heretofore lawful on *moral Grounds* (which are perpetual and unalterable) can never become unlawful. What, I pray, should make it unlawful for a serious Christian to vow something in token of *Thankfulness* for something receiv'd; or to vow a return of more than usual Duty, upon the receipt of an unusual Favour; which was plainly lawful to a Member of the Commonwealth of *Israel*? Whatever made it lawful for the one, makes it so also for the other. With those Vows that were formerly in use, that were purely *Ceremonial*, 'tis freely own'd we have now nothing to do. But Vows that are *Moral* in their Matter, Manner, and Ends, can never become simply unlawful. Withal, the Benefit of such Vows, if well manag'd, may be now as great as ever: They may be as effectual to make Persons more steady, circumspect, and wary; and more vigorous in

in striving against Sin; and to quicken, spur, and engage to Duty; under the Gospel, as ever they were under the Law: They must therefore certainly be as lawful and warrantable now, as then. Which hath also been the common Sentiment of Christians all along, down to the Days wherein we live. Observe farther,

3. THAT such sort of Vows are Religious Matters; for Persons thereby tie themselves in a Bond to God. They are too Sacred to be us'd in common Affairs. In ordinary Concerns, or any Matters of Civil Prudence, *Resolutions* may suffice; between which, and *Vows* strictly taken, there's a great difference. A Man may resolve wisely, justly, and warrantably, such and such things concerning his Estate, and Affairs in the World; whereas it may be no way fitting to turn such *Resolutions* into *Vows*. A Man may resolve that he'll never be bound for another, or that he'll spend but so much, weekly, monthly, or yearly on such an Occasion; but for any one to bind himself to any such things by *Vows*, wherein God is call'd to Witness, and the Soul laid under a Curse, is the height of Imprudence, and altogether unwarrantable. We find not in Scripture any Vow of a good Man, but it was aim'd at a Religious End, and in tendency to the Service of God, and not to any worldly Interest or Respect. To make use of them in common Matters, makes them ludicrous, and tends to take away their Awe where they are justly, fitly, and properly made use of. Farther,

T 3

4. SUCH

4. SUCH Particular Vows may be made conditionally. Although the general Vow, (whereof *Chap. 2.*) whereby we give up our selves and our All to God, must be Absolute; yet Vows made upon Particular Occasions, often have been, and may be Conditional. Of this nature was *Hanab's Vow*, if God would but look on her Affliction, and give her a Man-child, she vow'd she wou'd in an especial manner return him to the Donor, and there should no Razor come upon his Head; but he should be a *Nazarite*. By which vow of hers, she was no ways bound, unless it pleas'd God to give her a Man-child; and such a Condition as that, is at any time lawful, because the thing vow'd can't be perform'd, but upon the supposition of that as antecedent. Such also was *Jephthah's Vow*; if God brought him back safe, he would offer what first met him out of his House as a Burnt-Offering; though that Vow of his was on sundry Accounts unwarrantable. That Vow of all *Israel* also, which we meet with *Numb. 21. 2.* was Conditional. They vow'd, That if God would deliver the *Canaanites* into their hands, they would utterly destroy their Cities. And many other Instances there are in Scripture. And I am fully satisfied, that, generally speaking, our Ground would be more safe, our Procedure more clear, and we should be much the less hamper'd and perplex'd by means of any after-change in our State and Circumstances, that might happen to us, would we affix and specify the Conditions on which we make our Vows on Particular Occasions.

5. THERE

§. THERE are four several Ends to which such particular and special Vows have been, and may be directed: two of which Ends relate to *time past*, and the other two to *that which is to come*. Those Vows relate to *time past*, whereby we intend either to express our Gratitude to God for Benefits receiv'd, or in order to the averting his Displeasure, inflict a Punishment on our selves, as 'twere, for Offences committed. We may call the former the Exercises of *Thanksgiving*, and the latter of *Repentance*: Of the former sort we have an instance in *Jacob*, in the fore-cited 28th of *Genesis*, at the latter end: where to the general Vow before insisted on, of taking the Lord for his God, &c. he adds this special one; That if God would bring him back safe from his Banishment, into the Land promis'd to his Fathers, he would consecrate the tenth part of all his Substance to his immediate Service; and this to show his grateful Resentment of the kind Protection and Conduct of the Divine Providence. Of the like kind were the Peace-Offerings, or Thank-Offerings, vow'd in ancient times by Pious Kings and Generals when engag'd in a just War, if they got the victory, or were succour'd in extremity. And thus is that Text in particular that was singled out for the foundation of this Discourse to be understood; and in general all those places in the Book of *Psalms* that speak of Vows: And such Vows may be, and often are us'd by many pious Person- in our times: if God will give them success in such or such an Enterprize or Design; if he will thus and thus prosper

sper them in their Business ; if he will extricate them out of this Perplexity, and avert that Calamity, they will erect such a Monument of their Thankfulness, and bind themselves to this or that, whereto they were not straitly before oblig'd : Which practice is very laudable, provided Persons are careful and exact in paying what they have vow'd. I'll exemplifie the second sort of *vows*, which I said may be call'd Exercises of *Repentance* by a familiar instance : Suppose a Man's Appetite have drawn him into a snare, he may, to mortifie it, and to punish himself for an Act or Acts of Intemperance whereinto he hath been betray'd, for a time renounce all sorts of Dainties, and forbear those things which are most pleasing and grateful, and make use of a *vow* too, that the Bond may be the stronger. Not that all in such a case are oblig'd to this course ; but this they may do who find reason to conclude such a *Vow* would be beneficial. Such a *Vow* is lawful, and yet free. *Vows* that relate to time to come, tend partly to make us more cautious, and partly to quicken and spurr us to the performance of our Duty. Of the former sort this may be an instance ; suppose a Man finds a Diversion in it self innocent, stirs his Passions, ruffles his Mind, and so insensibly draws him into Sin ; it may be useful for such an one, by the interposition of a *Vow*, to deny himself for a time that Diversion, altho' it be in it self innocent, that he may learn the better afterwards to bridle his Passions, and stand upon his guard : And withal suppose a Man finds upon Reflection, that he hath

let

let a great deal of time slip thro' his hands, of which he's able to give no account, and so hath lost it he knows not how: Why may he not by a Vow rouse up himself, shake off his Sloth, and firmly bind himself to make a better Improvement for the future? which may be taken for an Instance of the last sort of Vows; the proper Use whereof is to drive on the backward lingering Soul to do its Duty, breaking through Difficulties and Delays, that by strengthening our Bonds, and setting the Danger before our Eyes, we may be excited to escape it. But if we would go upon sure Grounds, approve our selves to God, and leave no room for Regret, Trouble, and Repentance, we must in all our particular *vows* use these following Cautions, and keep within the ensuing Limitations.

1. WE must take care to *vow* nothing but what we know and are assured is agreeable to the Will of God. The Design of *vowing* is to please God; but if we *vow* any thing displeasing to him we provoke him. Our *vowing* it wont make it lawful if it was not before so; for no Vows of ours can dissolve the Obligation laid upon us by the Law of God. Strange was that Vow whereof we read, *Acts* 23:12. whereby above 40 Persons bound themselves under a Curse, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed *Paul*. And often indeed hath Persons Wickedness carry'd them out that way, *viz.* to make Vows that are directly even against the Law of Nature; and often also hath God severely animadverted on such Persons. 'Tis a common

mon but true Relation that is to be met with in several Practical Writers of a parcel of Pot Companions, who made a Vow that they would not stir till they had drunk out a Barrel of Drink, which while they were about with great Mirth and Jollity, one of the Company sunk down dead in the place, and never stirr'd more. 'Tis very dangerous in any case, to make a thing that is sinful the matter of a Vow; and yet of this the Jewish Doctors were in many Instances grossly guilty: Particularly they allow'd Persons directly to thwart and cross the 5th Commandment, by vowing that they would not of themselves or by others, afford their Brethren, Sisters, Kindsfolks, Neighbours, no nor even their Parents themselves, any Maintenance or Support, or any thing whence they might receive any Fruit, Profit, Benefit or Advantage: And this they covered under the specious Title of a Vow, when in reality 'twas rather a most abominable Curse. Of which sort of Vows we are to understand, *Mat. 15. 5. It is a Gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me.*

BUT neither are things doubtful fit Matter for a Vow: To make a Vow in a dubious case, is as it were to run blindfold upon a Precipice. We must never venture therefore to make *vows*, till we are sure the Matter of them are not things forbidden.

2. WE should take heed of vowing any thing above our own Strength. We should measure the Gifts and Grace God hath bestowed upon us, before we pretend to vow any thing, lest we shoot beyond the Mark, and ham-

hamper instead of benefiting our selves. Thus for instance, a Vow of *Celibacy* is unwarrantable, because there are few can safely bear it : and who can say he is in the Number of those few ? Or if he is at present, that he shall always continue so ? How knows any one he shall have Strength to keep such a Vow, when he hath made it ? To vow any thing above our Strength, is one proper Notion of tempting God.

3. WE should take heed of vowing any thing rashly, and hand over head. Vows are things to be manag'd with great Dread and Tenderness. Whatever we vow, we should do it maturely, lest we leave room for Repentance : The Case of *Jephthah* and *Herod*, and sundry others, lets us know what Snares Persons may bring themselves into, by rushing rashly into such Engagements. *Jephthah* vow'd that whatever met him first out of his House, when he returned from his Victory, should be offered up in Sacrifice : To punish him for his Rashness, Providence so order'd it, that his Daughter was the Person ; and therefore he presently repented. This was also *Saul's* Fault, who vow'd the Death of any of his Followers, that should stay to taste any of the Honey that lay in his way ; whereby he exceedingly prejudic'd himself, by reason that the want of this Refreshment disabled his Army from pursuing the Enemy. Of this sort also was the Vow of the eleven Tribes, that they would none of them give any Wives to the Men of the Tribe of *Benjamin* ; which we meet with *Judg.* 21. But we find when they came soberly
to

to reflect on the Consequence of what they had done, *viz.* that a Tribe was hereby likely to be cut off from *Israel*, they presently repented. And indeed we may generally observe that Repentance and Sorrow are the genuine Products of rash Vows, we should beware therefore of making a *Vow* in a Passion; which being once mov'd, blinds Reason and Judgment, and hinders the weighing things in a just Balance. A calm Spirit and deliberate Judgment is most likely to make *Vows* that will give no Cause for Repentance.

4. WE should take heed of making too many particular *Vows*, by means whereof we may easily run into Superstition. This was the great Fault of the Times next preceding the Reformation in these Parts of the World: All Religion almost was generally run into *Vows* about Abstinence from certain Meats, Fasting-days, Pilgrimages, and visits to the Shrines of Saints, bodily Mortifications, and a thousand Monkish Inventions: which is also one great Fault of the Romanists to this day; who by their particular Vows eat out all real Religion. But we should beware of framing a Law and Religion to our selves by our voluntary Vows; which God never made us by his Authority: They are not to make us new Duties and Religions, but to further us in the Obedience of that which our Lord hath imposed on us.

5. IT would be Wisdom in us to take care that our particular Vows be for the most part temporary. For that Vow which for a time might be tolerable, and really beneficial, may in

in time grow intolerable, and wretchedly perplex us. We should take heed of binding our selves for Futurity, to all that may possibly be our Duty at present; by reason that a Change of Things and Circumstances may work a Change in our Duty. We should therefore take care that what we vow be not only consistent with our Duty at present, but that we bind our selves to it by our Vow no longer than it shall remain consistent with our Duty.

6. IF we are under Government, we should not without our Governour's Consent vow to do any thing which we might not lawfully do without their Consent, in case we had not vow'd it: For that were for Persons actually at present to disobey those to whom they ought to be subject; and to bind themselves to disobey them for the future. In the thirtieth of *Numbers* God hath plainly determined this Matter as to Women that are in subjection either to their Fathers or Husbands; their *Vows* are not binding unless they are ratified by those to whom they are in Subjection; and therefore they should not vow without their Consent. And we may naturally draw a Parallel as to the cases of others also that are proportionably in a state of Subjection. But in case it be a thing that we may or must do, altho our Governours should forbid it, then may we vow it altho they should be averse to it.

THESE Limitations and Cautions we must mind and observe, if we desire to make use of *David's* Words with reference to them; *Thy Vows are upon me O God.* For of all particular Vows these only he allows; 'tis none but such as these that he approves. AND

AND if we'll put all together, we may without much Difficulty discern what's to be said to the three Monastick Vows, so much celebrated among the Papists, *viz.* the Vow of *Continence, Poverty, and blind Obedience.* None of them are any where commanded of God; nor are they lawful or allowable; for things that are not in our Power, nor depend at all on our Will's Determination, are the Subject of them; and they are repugnant to Christian Liberty, and the common Calling of all Christians. Continence in their Sense, (*viz.* a total Abstinence from the Female Sex) without Burning, is not in some Mens Power, nor doth it depend on the Pleasure of the Will, but is the singular Gift of God. A blind Obedience to a mortal Man is contrary to Christian Liberty. And to live by begging, and on others Labours, without doing any thing, is contrary to the common Calling of all; to whom this is given as a general Rule; that he who labours not, should not eat. But those who would see the Unlawfulness of these sort of Vows display'd, must consult our Protestant Writers in their Controversies with the

* Particu-Romanists. *

larly *Peter Martyr* in his *Defence* against *Smith*; and in his *Loci Communes*, *Class. 3. c. 6.*

Calvin in

his *Institutions*, lib. 4. cap. 13. *Musculus* in his *Loci Communes*, de *Votis*. *Chemnitius* in his *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, Part 3, *Riv.* & in his *Summa Controversiarum*, Tract. 2. *Quest.* 22, & 51. *Chamier* in his *Pansiraz. Cathol.* Tom. 3. lib. 20. *Thef. Salmuriens.* Part 3. pag. 709, 716, &c.

AFTER all 'tis an easy thing to observe how wretchedly some Persons are hamper'd and perplex'd about the binding and obliging Force of their particular Vows; for whose sake I shall close this Chapter with some brief Touches on this Question.

HOW

HOW far and in what cases such Vows may be dispens'd with?

PLAIN it is that Vows, well, lawfully, and deliberately made about a thing that is in our Power, are not to be carelessly, nor would they be impuently violated: This were to break our Faith with God, which is a great Impiety. But 'tis sufficiently evident such Vows are not to be paid.

1. WHICH are made about a wicked and unjust thing. Such Vows are in their own Nature null, and to attempt to pay them is an aggravated Crime. *Herod* therefore needed not for his Oath or Vows sake have done what his Conscience told him was flatly unlawful, as he did in taking away *John Baptist's* Life, whom he knew to be a just Man, and to have done nothing deserving of Death. Sorrow for his wicked vow or Oath had been vastly preferable to the Performance of it. In any such cases the Conscience of him who makes the vow, as soon as he discerns it to be unjust suffices to deliver him from the Obligation of it, which is properly none at all.

2. NEITHER are such Vows to be paid as are made about a thing which is not in our power; for they were not lawfully made: nor is any thing necessary to loose us from them, besides a discerning that the thing vow'd was not in our power, or that he who vow'd it was not at liberty to do so: for such vows are really null. The Power in such a case should indeed be griev'd at his Rashness and Inconsiderateness, repent of it, and beg Pardon of God; but he needs not the Help of any Superior

perjurer to loosen his Conscience before God.

3. MUCH less are those *vows* to be paid, which can't possibly be punctually discharged, or not without a Man's incurring great and inevitable Danger, or running the risk of ruining himself or his Family. For such *vows* are against Christian Charity. *God will have Mercy and not Sacrifice*; and is more delighted with Piety and Charity, than detrimental and dangerous Oblations, whereby a Man should hazard the Ruin of his Health, his Estate, or his Family. If a Person by *vow* consecrates to God any Land or Money, or any part of his Estate, for the use of the Poor or his Church, and can be without it, without apparent and considerable Detriment, he is undoubtedly bound to pay his *Vow*, and would otherwise be unfaithful and a perjurer: But if he can't do it without considerable Damage and Mischief, that Rule of the Apostle which we meet with, *2 Cor. 8. 13.* must take place; where says he, *I mean not that others be eas'd, and you burden'd.*

IF a Man hath vow'd that he'd for all his Life abstain from Wine or Flesh, and by Experience finds that he can't do so without prejudicing his Health, or endangering his Life, it is much better for him to break his *Vow*, than run so great a Hazard: tho in the mean time he ought to repent of his rash *Vow*, and seriously lament the Necessity of breaking it before God, who if he sees him humble and penitent, will be ready to pardon and forgive his inconsiderate Rashness; for he will have Mercy and not Sacrifice. We may further observe,

4. THAT

4. THAT a Change of Things and Circumstances may cause the binding Force of Vows to cease: Not every Change, (for then Vows would signify nothing) but a Change in any thing wherein the Essence of them was concern'd. As in the *Matter* of them; as suppose I vow to give such a Sum yearly to the Poor, but have met with so many Croffes, that I have not so much left to give; I am not oblig'd: Or in the *End* of them; As suppose a Parent before it's born, vows to give up his Child if a Male, to the Service of God in the Work of the Ministry; if it afterwards evidently appear that he's better capable of promoting the Divine Honour in another Post or Employment, the Vow binds not: for if the *End* of a Vow ceaseth, the Obligation ceaseth together with it: Or in the *State* of the *Persons* that made the Vows on which the Capacity of paying them depends; tho he that is the culpable Cause of that Change of State and Circumstances that incapacitates him to pay his Vows, is justly chargeable with the violation of them.

BUT those who are desirous to see these Matters fully handled, I would refer to the Learned *Sanderſon's Prælectiones de Juramento*; and Mr. *Baxter's Directory*, Part 3. Chap. 5.

C H A P. XVII.

Of Vows made in a time of Sickneſs, Diſtreſs, or Danger, and the ſenſe of them that ſhould be afterwards retain'd.

OF all the Vows that are and may be made upon particular Occaſions, none more deſerve to be conſider'd, than thoſe made upon a ſick Bed, or in an hour of Trouble and Danger; for the forgetting and breaking which, many have much to answer; and the retaining a due ſenſe whereof, many, even of the beſt of Perſons, find to be exceeding difficult: I'll therefore ſpend this Chapter in doing theſe three things; and therewith cloſe this Treatiſe.

1. I'll lay down ſome Obſervations concerning the making Vows in a time of Trouble and Diſtreſs.

2. I'll propound ſome Motives to induce thoſe that make them, to a ſerious remembrance and faithful payment of them.

3. I'll lay down ſome few Directions that may be helpful to keep up a lively ſenſe of them upon our Minds.

THE

THE Observations I make, are these following.

1. THAT God expects that Persons when they are rebuk'd for Sin, when they are in distress, and under his afflicting Hand, should, out of a sense of past Miscarriages, make Vows of Amendment. This is many times God's aim and intent in sending Trouble and Afflictions; he expects Persons should then look back, and think of their ways, that they may turn their feet unto his Testimonies: That they should humble themselves under his mighty Hand, acknowledge their past Sins, be abas'd for them, and promise to leave them: That they should recollect the Duties they have neglected, with sorrow own their past Faults, and seriously engage to amend. When Affliction produces not some Fruit or other of this kind, God reckons *he hath smitten People in vain, and that they receive no Correction.*

2. WE may observe, that 'tis natural almost to all when in distress, trouble, and anguish, to make Vows to God of better Obedience. Hardly any thing's more common than for Persons when they come to feel the weight of God's Hand, and the smart of his Rebukes, to vow and promise that they will be better, and live better; more mind God, and their Souls, and another World; and lay the Concerns of Eternity more to heart; and that especially when they are under

Death-threatening Sickness, and they seem to themselves just to face another World, and to be upon passing into it: Then Conscience, as drowsie as it might have been before, is apt to fly in most People's faces, to lay open their Guilt, and display their Sins in their true Colours, attended with all their several aggravating Circumstances; then those Faults and Miscarriages that before were over-look't or counted small, shall appear to have been very great and provoking; and little Neglects which in Health and Strength occasion'd not, it may be, a concerned Thought, shall then cast the Soul into Pangs and Agonies that are scarce conceivable. Then oh might they but be spar'd, how good would they be! how exactly would they live! how conscientiously would they discharge their Duty! what improvement would they make of their Time! how faithful would they be in the management of their Talents! how diligently and seriously would they pray, and hear, and meditate, and perform all other holy Duties! and what pains would they take to get their Evidences for Heaven clear! What Vows and Promises will most then make of a strictly pious and religious Life; of a careful shunning all Sin, and vigorous pursuit of universal Holiness! and that with such a vehemence, that any one almost would think they were really in earnest. And if we suppose the Affliction to be of a lower nature; as in the case of severe Pain, or under any considerable Disappointment or Cross that is dejecting, or in
the

the prospect of Danger approaching, if Conscience be at all awaken'd, Persons are generally apt to be very ready to make Vows and Resolutions against those Sins, which appear to them to have been the occasion of the Divine Frowns, or to have had any hand in their distress and trouble, or to be likely to pull down Divine Displeasure upon them. 'Tis natural to all almost in trouble to betake themselves to their Prayers; and Prayers at such times are most usually accompany'd with Vows. But,

3. OBSERVE farther, that 'tis very common for Persons to forget such Vows afterwards; to lose the sense of them, and never pay them. The Sailor mention'd by *Erasmus*, who when he was in a dangerous Storm, and in great fear of his Life, made a Vow to a certain Saint of a Wax-Taper as big as the Main Mast of the Ship; but when he came to be in safety, thought a Farthing Candle might be sufficient, gives us a Model of most Men's Tempers: who are much more forward to make Vows when they are in trouble and danger, than to pay them when they are out of it. How often shall we see Persons, who by the apprehensions of Death's near approach to them, were cast into inexpressible Agonies, and thereupon cry'd to God, and begg'd and intreated of him, with all imaginable earnestness and importunity, that he would spare them a little longer, and try them once more; which if he would do, they vow and

promise their whole future Lives shall show forth and express their grateful Resentments; for that they will spend them entirely in his Service, and that at another guests rate than formerly: They'll rip up their past Actions, freely confess their Sins, and bewail their Follies, and vow by all that's Sacred, that for time to come they'll stand on their guard, watch against Temptation, allow themselves in no Sin, nor in the neglect of any Duty, but will lead an Holy, Heavenly, Mortify'd, Self-denying Life, in the strict observance of the Rules of our Religion: who when God hath heard their Cries, and gratify'd them with a farther time of Trial, and prolong'd and renew'd their Lives unto them, suffer their Heat in a little time to wear off, slide into their wonted deadness, carelessness, and lukewarmness, and return to their old Sins, Failures, and Neglects: in a little time indulge to their old Lusts as freely as before, if not worse than ever; and are not a whit chang'd or alter'd; but the same as before, as if nothing at all had pass'd between God and them. And if it be so when there's the apprehension of Death in the case, we may well conceive it is the same in lower instances; as under the fearful apprehensions of any thing short of it; under racking Pain, or any sinking Disquietment; in which cases, and others of the like nature, 'tis a very common thing for Persons to vow and promise, a more careful guarding against such or such a Corruption, or such a Temptation, as they know is most apt
to

to prevail upon them, or a more faithful discharge of such a Duty as hath been before neglected, a more close walking with God, a more steddy trust in Him, and more entire resignation to Him, and the like: But let but the Danger be over, and the Trouble at an end, and oh how soon are such Vows forgotten, as if never made! how quickly is the sense of them lost! We are told, *Luke 17.* that our Saviour cleans'd ten Lepers at once; and but one of them had any thing like a sense of his Deliverance, or came to return Thanks to his Great Benefactor: This our Lord seem'd to wonder at, and therefore cries out, *Where are the Nine?* Here was however one in ten that was duly affected with the Goodness of God, and made suitable Returns: But I believe I should keep within compass if I should say, that scarce one in an hundred of those who come under Vows to God in trouble and distress, take care with any Faithfulness to pay them afterwards. An Eminent Divine (now with God) who had with with great Faithfulness for a course of many Years exercis'd his Ministry in this City, being ask'd by one, what number of the many he had known to be in great Agonies in Sicknes, and under the apprehensions of Death's approach, who then profess'd Repentance of their past wicked Lives, and promis'd and vow'd a serious and holy Life afterwards, to which they had before been Strangers; what number of such he had known, that in a Judgment

of Charity he could apprehend, were truly chang'd by their Sickness, and faithful in paying their Vows when recover'd: He answer'd, That he could not say, that in the whole course of his Ministry he had met with above Three of that Number, This is methinks very sad and doleful to consider. I have often in my own Thoughts been enquiring what should be the cause of this common Failure and Neglect; and it is, I think, well worth our enquiring after. The best Account I can give of it in short is this:

'Tis because there's commonly much more of Fear than Love, in the Vows made in Trouble and Distress: Persons under Affliction, if they are not utterly stupid, are under a sensible Conviction of their strait and close Dependence upon God, in whose hands they are, and who can do with them as seems good in his sight, without any check or controul: This, attended with a sense of Guilt, is naturally apt to excite strong Fear, lest he should deal severely; lest he should utterly take away forfeited Mercies, and punish the abuse of them by their withdrawalment; lest he should deny Succour in Danger, to those who are so sensible they are far from deserving it; lest he should suffer the Desert of their Sins to come upon them, and then to be sure woful must be their Case: Which Fear, if not duly temper'd with Love, and other Graces, will only prompt to look out for a guard for Self-preservation; and so self, and not
 H 4 God,

God, will be mainly ey'd in the vows made in such a case. If 'twere a true sense of Duty, a real love to God, that was the Spring of such Vows, they'd have a Foundation in the habitual Temper of the Soul, and so the effects of them would be visible: the cause would remain, even when the Trouble was over, which excited the particular Vows made, and therefore the Effect would appear. But when Fear is the sole Spring of them, and that Fear wears off, as the Trouble and Distress blows over, we need not wonder that the Vows are forgotten, and the Effects cease, together with their Cause. And because it is so common a thing for Persons in their Vows in such a case, to be much more acted by Fear than Love, therefore is it so much more common for the sense of such vows to be lost than retain'd.

Withal, such Vows generally arise more from passionate Transport, than a deliberate Consent of Heart; which is another cause of their being so often forgotten and unminded: View a Person in distress and anguish, or under the apprehension of danger, and you'll find the Spirit in a sort of Ferment: Now in the Body while the Blood is in a fermentation, the animal Spirits are much more eager and impetuous than at other times; and so it is also in the mind. Trouble and Danger produces a Ferment, and vehement Commotion; then presently there

there may be an eager bent towards that to which there's no habitual Inclination : serious Thoughts to which the Soul was before perhaps a Stranger, find a place during this Commotion ; and God must be ey'd, who before possibly was little minded or regarded ; and so vows may be made of the Duties owing to him, with a seeming earnestness ; but let the Bow be unbent, and it presently returns to its natural state ; so let but this Commotion and Disturbance cease, upon the removal of its Cause, and God may without any cause of wondering be as much disregarded as ever. 'Twas in a passionate Transport such Persons made their vows ; when they come to be still and calm, the sense of them vanishes : But let Vows at such a time be made with a full, deliberate, fixed Consent of Heart, and you'll see the Effects of them will be lasting.

FINALLY ; therefore are vows made at such a time so often forgotten and unminded, because the most in making them aim but at the gaining the Mercy they need ; which being obtain'd, they see no cause for minding them any farther. Most seek, as it were, to bribe God to give them the Deliverance, Help, and Succour they stand in need of, by making vows and Promises to him ; by means whereof they think to engage him to relieve and befriend them. The Great God, tho' he sees from the first such Persons Treachery and Base-

Baseness, is yet many times pleas'd to step in with relief, in order to their farther Trial, and that their latent Corruption may be discover'd, and for other wise Ends: But as for them, when they are deliver'd, and out of their danger, and their trouble's over, they have no farther concern about the matter. And the reason is, because their End is answer'd, which is the most that is in any case aim'd at. These are some of the most common Occasions of this general neglect, tho' they are far from justifying it. We may farther observe,

4. THAT even truly pious Persons are too apt to forget the Vows they make to God in their trouble and distress; too prone to lose the sense of them, and let it wear off: Which need not be thought strange by any that know that the Best have but weak Graces, a subtil Enemy, and treacherous Hearts, and live in the midst of Snares and Temptations, whereby they are liable to be withdrawn from God, and diverted from their Duty. Even those who are truly serious in making Vows of a more close, strict, and uniform Obedience, for time to come, when under Divine Rebukes; even those who make such Vows out of true Love to God, and with a full Consent of Heart, and a sincere Aim at the Divine Glory, are too apt to be tardy and defective: They shall retain the Impressions of them sometimes for a longer, and otherwhiles for a shorter season; but generally It may be observ'd

serv'd their Warmth by degrees abates. There is indeed a difference in this case discernible between those that are upright in the main, and those who do but trifle with God. The former have defects as well as the latter; but they are their burthen; and the matter of their Sorrow and Lamentation, and not their contented Choice; they are ready to aggravate them, and seek not to extenuate their Guilt, that so their Sin may seem the smaller, and they be the more easily satisfied, as the latter usually do; If they find the sense of their Vows worn off, they endeavour to renew it; and don't shun the Thoughts of them, lest they should be reminded of the state they were in that occasion'd them, and so have their Trouble renew'd. And in many other respects do these two sorts of Persons differ; but yet that's no excuse for breaking Divine Bonds, and loosing the sense of the Divine Vows they are under, of which the Best should be afraid. I would therefore caution all to beware of playing fast and loose with God; to beware of vowing and not paying; to beware of losing the sense of renew'd Engagements; to beware of sliding again into Defects that were lamented and vow'd against under Affliction. And that my Caution may be the more effectual; I'll proceed now,

2. TO propound some Motives that should and ought to induce those who have made Vows in a time of Trouble and Distress,

strefs, to a serious remembrance, and faithful payment of them. And they are these :

1. Consider they are *God's Vows* that you are under : He remembers and records them, and will exact them at your hands. 'Tis not a Mortal like your selves that's easily eluded, or put off, or impos'd on, that you have herein to deal with; but the Great God who searches Hearts, and whose exact notice nothing can escape; and who weighs all things in a just Balance. You had need therefore take care to be punctual and faithful. He can't be deceiv'd; He won't be mock'd. Your *Vows* must be another day accounted for. Which is a Thought that methinks should strike an awe; and powerfully stir up diligence and care.

2. CONSIDER, That those Vows you made to God, when in distrefs and trouble, are *upon you*, whether yon mind and pay them, yea or not. Your forgetting, or not regarding them, doth not at all diminish their Force, or cause their Obligation to cease; but you are still responsible for their neglect. Did they, if over-look't and disregarded, lose their binding force, 'twere some excuse; but 'tis no such matter. 'Tho' you should never think of them more, yet your Engagements would be really as strong as ever. You'd continue bound by them, tho'

tho' you'd lose the Benefit of them: you'd be the worse for them, because you were not better'd by them. Think of it therefore; your Vows hold their force, whether you keep or break them. You can't loosen the Band, tho' you may lose the sense of it.

3. CONSIDER how disingenuous and ungrateful 'tis, when God hath heard our Supplications, and answer'd our Requests, and sent us the help implor'd and begg'd, for us to forget and not to mind our Vows. How unsuitable a return would this be, for his Kindness in succouring and delivering us, and interposing on our behalf; preventing our Fears, and exceeding our Hopes; and turning our Sorrow into Joy, and our Heaviness and Sadness, into Mirth and Gladness! May not God justly expect otherguess Treatment at our hands? May he not justly resent it in a very high manner, to have have his Kindness thus slighted? May not God say to us, Was this it that I deliver'd and spar'd you for; that you might have an opportunity of abusing my Goodness by breaking your vows? No certainly, by no means: When you come therefore into new Straits and Difficulties, go to whom you will to succour and deliver you, for I'll do it no more. Which suggests a farther Motive: And therefore,

4. CONSIDER how woful an Accent 'twill add to any new Troubles whereinto we may fall, for us then to remember Vows made in former straits, that have been neglected and unpaid. Think a little, and that seriously, how sadly your Consciences will be wounded, and your Souls dismayed, when the next Distress and Trouble comes, if you then find upon Reflection you were unthankful for your last merciful Deliverance and Preservation, and soon lost any Impressions it made upon you. How will it then cut you to the Heart to think how falsely, and treacherously, and deceitfully you dealt with God in breaking your solemn Vows and Promises! How will this Thought weaken your hold of God! and what a matter of sinking Discouragement will it be to you! think of it therefore soberly, and prevent the doubling and trebling of your own Difficulty in any further Trials God may have in store for you, by a faithful Payment of your Vows. And then,

5. CONSIDER further what Ground your Forgetfulness of, and Unfaithfulness to the Vows you made when in Trouble and Distress, may give you (as Circumstances may be) to question the Sincerity of your own Hearts. 'Tis true as I before hinted, there are certain Failures (and those not inconsiderable ones) in this Matter, that are consistent with Sincerity of Heart: but it is not an easy thing in all cases to distinguish them from such Neglects as
are

are Arguments and Indications of a rotten Heart and trifling Spirit; and how wofully may you embarrass your selves in this respect? Do but take care to act agreeably to the Vows and Engagements you came under in the Hour of your Trouble, and you'll be clear and free; you'll have a comfortable Evidence of your own Integrity: but if you are thoughtless and careless, allow your selves to live at the wonted rate, altho you are under new Engagements; and loose the Impressions which the afflictive Providences you were under, made upon you, and that once and again, over and over; believe it, you'll find the time will come when you'll be very apt to question whether all your Transactions with God, from first to last, have not been hypocritical; and whether there hath been any thing of Reality and Sincerity at the bottom on your part; and you'll find your selves so wofully embarrass'd, as not to be able to quiet your selves, or receive Satisfaction from others. As you would not have this to prove your Case, I beseech you be punctual with God, and faithful to him.

6. CONSIDER also what Advantage you give the Devil by neglecting to pay your Vows. Who would do any thing to rejoice his worst and bitterest Enemy, and put him in a capacity of doing him an inconceivable Mischief? and yet this is done by all you that make Vows to God, and forget and neglect them when you have done. You give an advantage to that subtil Enemy of yours that watches for
you.

your halting, and will make use of the least Slip or Failure, you indulge your selves in, as a means to withdraw you further and further from God, till at length Conscience is sorely wounded, and Grace sadly weakned; and so unless God be strangely merciful to you, you may go halting to your Graves. Let but these things be duly weigh'd, and you can't want Inducements to a serious Remembrance and faithful Payment of any Vows you made in Distress or Trouble.

IT now remains that I add some Directions that may be helpful to keep up a lively Sense of Vows made upon a sick Bed, or in any time of Fear, Distress or Danger. To any that are seriously desirous thereof, and would do what in them lies to engage themselves to pay their Vows to the most High, I would give the following Advice.

1. OFTEN endeavour to call to your lively Remembrance the State, Condition, and Frame that you were in, and the Sense you had of things when you made your Vows to God. Retire from the World ever and anon, and soberly set your selves down, and recollect what Thoughts and Apprehensions you had in the time of your Trouble, of God and Christ, of Sin and Holiness, of Heaven and Hell, and of a calm and peaceable Conscience; what Sense you had of your past Neglects and Failures and future Duty; what were your Cares, and Fears, and Hopes; and

Comforts ; how your spirits work'd ; what were Consciences Admonitions, and your Repentments. Did you not then think an Interest in God and Christ to be worth more than a thousand Worlds ? And would you not if they had been in your power rather have chosen to have parted with them, than to have gone without it ? Did not Sin then sit heavy upon your Minds, and depress your Spirits ? And did you not heartily wish that you had carefully shunned it, and watched against it ? How mean Thoughts had you of this Earth, and all the Riches, Honours, Pleasures, and Comforts of it, when you did not know but you were just upon leaving it ? Did you not then think those the happiest of Persons how long soever their present Circumstances were, that had a Treasure above, and could eye Heaven as their proper home ? and the like : The frequent recollecting of such Thoughts will help to perpetuate the Impressions they made, and their good Effects : And because our Memories are commonly weak and treacherous, and not so faithful as they should be to us in Matters of the greatest moment, it may be a considerable help to us to make use of Writing ; we should find it abundantly worth our while, and of no small Use to us, would we as soon as we are deliver'd out of Affliction and Trouble commit to Writing the State of our Case, and Frame of our Spirits, when we were under it ; what our Thoughts and Apprehensions were ; what supported and relieved us ; what Engagements particularly

larly we made, and upon what Inducements : Our Recourse whereto, whenever we find our selves apt to grow cold, might help to renew our Sense of our past *vows*, and engage us to answer and pay them ; and keep our after Lives from being like the new Editions of some Mens Books, which are always worst : by reason that besides the old *Errata*, new ones creep in, and are added to the former.

2. Engage your Friends and Relations who were Witnesses of your Trouble, that knew your Fears, and were acquainted with your *vows* then made of a better Life for time to come, to remind you of your Promises and Engagements, to watch over you, and tell you of them as there is occasion, and take it kindly of them, and be thankful to them, whenever they do so. A serious faithful Yoke-fellow for a Monitor in such a Case is a vast Advantage, because of the constant Oversight and Inspection which that Relation gives Opportunity for : but if that be wanting, it may in part be made up by other serious Christian Friends, whose Admonitions may be very helpful. And indeed in such a case there are few but need spurring, need to be put in mind of their Vows and Promises: We may see it in *Jacob's* case, who after he had, upon leaving his Father's House, made the solemn *vow* that hath been before cited out of *Gen. 28*, and when God had performed his Desire, and kept him safe, and brought him back again, he yet lingered a great while before he paid his

his *vow*, needed to be reminded, and was as one asleep, till a Call of God to go up to Bethel awakened him; as we see, *Gen. 35. 1.* and then presently we find he remembers what had past between God and him; and therefore cries to his Household, *ver. 3. Let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an Altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my Distress, and was with me in the way which I went.*

3. BE sure to take the first Opportunity of beginning to pay your *vows*. 'Tis a part of Dishonesty not to give to God according to the time in which he hath been merciful and gracious. And we may still observe that one Neglect shall always make way for another. Men are very apt to adjourn the Payment of their *vows* to what they call a more convenient Season, which with those who put it off from time to time, is never like to come. The longer we put off the paying of our Debts, the more unwilling and the less able shall we be at last.

4. PRAY often and earnestly to God, to keep up a lively Sense of your renewed Engagements on your Hearts and Spirits. As your *vows* were accompanied with Prayers, so let them be followed by them. Beg of God that he would guard you from the Temptations of an infectious World, and keep your Hearts from cooling. And let such Petitions be frequent and serious.

5. Look

5. Look for a Return of Trouble. Think not because this Affliction is at an end, and that Trial is over, and the other Burden is remov'd, that thou art therefore safe; thy Mountain stands strong, thou shalt never be moved: for thou mayst have more to go through than thou art aware of. Some Persons need not look far for a Prospect of fresh Trouble; as teeming Women, and those Persons that are liable to the racking and tormenting pain of Cholick, Gout or Stone, and the like. Think not therefore that all is over with thee, but expect new Trials and Difficulties; live in the expectation of being sick again, and that to that degree as that thou shalt not recover; in the expectation of being pained afresh, when it may be thou wilt not so easily find Relief; think in any case that thy last Pressures, or others of the same kind, as bad, or worse, may return; and as ever thou expectest God should then be thy Stay and Helper, thy Shield and Buckler, pay the *vows* thou madest him in thy last Distress. Do but really look for fresh Exercises and Conflicts, (which thou canst never want reason to do, whilst thou art encompass'd with a vail of Flesh) and that will help to keep up a Sense of your *vows* under your last. And then,

6. BE duly sensible of the Treachery of your own Hearts. Take heed of depending on your own Strength. If you once grow secure, you are in constant Danger of a Surprise

prize. Remember that confident *Peter* presently fell. Give not way to any such Thoughts as these, that your Vows were so serious, and your Resolutions so strong, that it's almost impossible for you ever to lose the Sense of them. Alas! so far is it from that, that how strong and serious soever they were, when you come into the midst of Snares and Temptations, you'll find it very difficult to retain any Impressions that shall signify any thing.

Let every one therefore whom God hath succour'd in Distress, and deliver'd in an hour of Danger, say with *David*, *I will sing*
Psal. 61. 8. Praise unto thy Name, O Lord, for ever; that I
may daily perform my Vows.

FINIS.

